

was refused at the stations, and the peasantry showed the pure Russian type in face and costume.'

Or suppose that he takes down some standard text book to read about Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. 'On the 23rd of June the French crossed the Niemen and commenced the invasion of Russian Poland. As long as they marched through Polish territory they found no special difficulty, as the population was well-disposed; but when they reached Russia proper the difficulties of the task became evident.' (Lodge: *A History of Modern Europe*, Murray, 1913.) Simple Simon will begin to get angry. And he will be fully justified. What it comes to is this. Real history, the history of impartial scholarship, is not written in the light of the political disputes and presuppositions of today. Instead it illuminates them. Suppose our Simple Simon, instead of reading *Six Centuries of Russo-Polish Relations* had read the following, the passage from Bayard's account of his travels or the failure of the Russian plan of devastation in 1812 would have been immediately intelligible:—

'Though the majority of the subjects of the Lithuanian dukes were Russian, the Russian element failed to become dominant. The dynasty remained heathen till the middle of the fourteenth century and ultimately became Roman Catholic. Lithuania never became a consciously Russian state, and this justifies its exclusion from the present account of Russian history.' ('Russia, 1015-1462': *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, vol. vii, chap. XXI, p. 616.) The author, Mr D. S. Mirsky, is, of course, a Russian scholar. After reading that Simple Simon would not necessarily be in a position to argue for the frontier as agreed upon by the Treaty of Riga or for the 'Curzon Line': he would however have a reasonable idea of what the quarrel was about. And if, having read a little more, he decides to take one side or the other he will be a very useful ally.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS

THE EUROPEAN SPIRIT. By Karl Jaspers. Translated with an Introduction by Ronald Gregory Smith. Viewpoints No. 7. (S.C.M. Press; 2s. 6d.)

At an International Meeting held at Geneva in September 1946 Professor Karl Jaspers delivered a lecture which he gave the title *Vom Europäischen Geist*. It was subsequently published in Les Editions de la Baconnière under the title of *L'Esprit Européen*. and this was apparently the title of the Meeting at which it was delivered. The more modest title which Jaspers gave to his lecture suggests that the essay is to be read as notes rather than as a comprehensive survey, so that his limitation of his subject by the three ideas of freedom, history and knowledge cannot be taken to be complete. Fifteen years ago Karl Jaspers wrote his book 'The spiritual situation of our time' (the English version is *Man in the Modern Age*); and that book took stock of the spiritual position of Europe prior to the second world war, as similar works by Ham-

macher and Cohn had done before the first world war. The Geneva lecture is not a post-war counterpart to that book. It is much less comprehensive and of a far more popular nature. We need not therefore expect this lecture to contribute to our knowledge of existential philosophy. Mr Smith prefaces his translation by an introduction, almost half as long as Jasper's own essay. Only the first and the last paragraphs of this introduction, however, actually deal with existential philosophy. Whoever has understood what is existential thinking or is even capable of thinking existentially, will doubt whether Mr Smith is a suitable champion against existential criticism when he writes:

'But this dogma [of the Incarnation] would still be in danger of being a mere intellectual assertion with only symbolical comfort for man's understanding if it were only said that God assumed humanity. The point and the fructifying energy of the idea lies in its concretion: God became a man.'

What is this theology talking about, something which *is* or something which is *said* or *thought* (John 19:21)? It is because of this misconception of the meaning of existential reality that I trust that Mr Smith has widely misunderstood his author. H. Y.

A GALLERY OF CHINESE IMMORTALS. Selected by Lionel Giles. (Wisdom of the East Series; Murray; 4s.)

This little book recounts a number of legends of the Chinese 'Hsien', those remarkable beings who attain immortality by their austerities. The stories themselves have considerable charm; they relate the adventures of the 'hsien' and their disciples in search of immortality and the amazing feats they perform once they have attained it. But to the serious student their chief significance lies in the light they throw on popular Asiatic religious concepts. While many adherents of Asiatic religions have achieved deep insight into spiritual reality, for the masses spiritual progress is associated with acquisition of miraculous powers, giving mastery over the natural world, powers of divination and prophecy and long life.

The Chinese have a vast gallery of these immortals. The underlying conception of 'hsien-ship' is that those who have attained a perception of the eternal principles underlying the universe of those principles, that is, they must themselves become immortal. The 'hsien' attain their immortality by a strict discipline of mind and body—by cultivating the virtues of gentleness, self-abnegation and passivity, by studying the sacred books, and by strict attention to bodily discipline and exercises. The swallowing of an elixir is an essential part of practically all the stories, and marvellous adventures are related about the finding and compounding of these elixirs. Still more marvellous are the stories of their deeds after they had attained 'hsien-ship'—they rode tigers, cured epidemics, travelled at incredible speeds. Some became beneficent rulers, or advisers to Emperors and Governors. Some were regrettably addicted to