

and this 'disinterested intellectual curiosity' was never allowed full play. Instead the whole business was presented as a troublesome squabble about whether the Pripet Marshes were inhabited by Poles or Russians. The Poles, we were told, were, like the Cavaliers in *1066 and all That*, 'rong but wromantic'. That unimpeachable Conservative, Lord Curzon, had provided the Poles with a satisfactory frontier after the last war; and all that was needed was that they should return to this frontier. The few who consulted the official life of Lord Curzon were presumably surprised to find no mention of this stroke of statesmanship in the book. Rumours of deportations to Siberia were, it was felt, adequately answered when the editor of England's most enlightened weekly explained that the deportees were only decadent aristocrats who were being taken to Asiatic Russia to learn how the poor really lived.

It is possible to differ widely as to where the western frontier of Russia should be; it is possible to argue that Polish diplomacy has not always been entirely admirable. On the other hand, what is impossible to maintain is that the destruction of Poland which took place at the end of the 18th century was anything other than the disgraceful affair which Europe has always considered it to be. H. A. L. Fisher described it as 'one of the most shameful episodes in the annals of Europe'. Nearly a century earlier, in 1842, Macaulay had written of it as 'that great crime, the fruitful parent of other great crimes'. Talleyrand, who had witnessed the business, described the Partition of Poland as Europe's 'mortal sin', and on the subject of mortal sin Talleyrand's opinion may not unfairly be described as that of an expert, almost, one might say, that of a connoisseur. Yet the territorial decision which was reached at Yalta involved handing over to Russia everything which she had gained in the three historic partitions of Poland, together with approximately half Austria's share into the bargain. The verdict of history was reversed and what had been Europe's 'mortal sin' was converted overnight into an act of niggardly and insufficient justice to Imperial Russia.

But it is not merely a question of political morality. As long ago as the 16th century Melanchthon had pointed out that Germany and the Empire could not be invaded 'nisi per Poloniam'. Sir Halford Mackinder had emphasised in the nineteen-twenties that to control Eastern Europe brought the control of the world within measurable distance. For this reason, if for no other, the Polish Question must continue to be of essential importance in world politics. The end is not yet, and the wise man will therefore take care to read M. UmiaŃkowski's book.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS.

THE ATOM AND THE WAY. By Maurice Browne. (Gollancz; 3s. 6d.)

Here is a man who realises more poignantly than the crowd that the atomic age has begun; whose pamphlet is an honourable attempt to wrestle with the age's problem: What can survive and how? Mr Maurice Browne answers in terms of his own religious experience.

This has taught him that spiritual laws exist and can be discovered, having been declared by the greatest religious teachers; that obedience to them means suffering and self-abandonment, but also freedom, and that no other path leads away from chaos.

Mr Browne's sum of belief might be described as an H.C.F. of the truth deposited in various religious systems. Some of his Christian readers will content themselves with a label—Syncretism, Popular Esoterics, Yogi-bogi—and pass on. Others may find it possible to assimilate Mr Browne's terms of reference and learn from him. I myself found concentration on his meaning arduous, but liberally rewarded—*contemplata aliis tradit*.
COLIN SUMMERFORD.

A STUDY OF HISTORY. By Arnold J. Toynbee. Abridgement of Volumes I-VI by D. C. Somervell. (Oxford University Press; 25s.)

This book is a model of what an abridgment should be and will be of great service to those who do not care to give time to reading Mr Toynbee's original six volumes. A short review cannot do justice to Mr Toynbee's erudition, style, and depth of analysis. It can only give an indication of what the author has attempted in his gigantic study of civilisations.

Mr Toynbee believes that historians should use the comparative method, the method used in all the natural sciences, and should endeavour, as natural scientists do, to reach conclusions which can be formulated as general laws. The ordinary historian neither does this nor wishes to do it. He is content to record facts, or events, in a temporal sequence and for this purpose he treats political states in isolation. This can only lead to partial understanding, and more likely to misunderstanding, of the causes of social change, which can only be brought to light by comparing the development of institutions in a series of such states. The particular will then be seen to be a special instance of the general. Thus the planting of colonies by Corinth and Chalcis, the creation of a military organisation by Sparta, and certain changes in the economic and political structure of Athens will be seen to be different ways of reacting to a common stimulus, the pressure of population on the means of subsistence.

Although he is dealing with static societies, it is precisely this kind of comparative study which the social anthropologist makes. The social anthropologist is able to use the comparative method because he has a very large number of societies to compare with one another and because primitive societies are easily isolated as social units; though Mr Toynbee underestimates the difficulties involved in treating even the most primitive societies as units. Indeed, the chief difficulty in all the social sciences is to isolate comparable units, and this preliminary task in the use of the comparative method has never been satisfactorily accomplished in historical studies of civilisation. Philosophies of history have never been very successful. Mr Toynbee knows this, of course, but has not been deterred by his knowledge from making a fresh attempt.