

history which, because of their obscurity, are apt to be either disregarded or darkly distorted by the western mind.

By emphasising the immense part played in Russian history by her Christian heritage, Miss Iswolsky draws attention to the more important of the two links which Russia has with the west; for her other (at the moment more obvious) link is that technical, materialist mass-life, which she has borrowed from us. This superficial common ground masks the other more profound inheritance which both east and west derive from the undivided Christendom of the first Christian millenium.

This valuable clarification of the riddle of Russian history helps us to see that, in form at least, the growth of Eastern Christendom has not been so unlike that of the West; and although the one springs from Byzantium and the other from Rome, each society, whatever its present delinquencies, is fundamentally a Christian society, tied all the more closely to its origins in its very efforts to escape and overthrow them.

At the moment, perhaps, the relationship between the two worlds is governed by material needs; but any continuing contacts must necessarily take account of the true characters of the two societies and in this profounder trading, the things of the spirit will be paramount. Miss Iswolsky believes that the underlying pattern of Russian life is only superficially and momentarily obscured and that we who will have to be her future neighbours would be wise to get to know her true spirit. In helping us do this, Miss Iswolsky is doing us a service.

The many stories and anecdotes of Russian saints and sages, mostly no doubt unknown to western readers, is an added delight incidental to the main purpose of the book.

C.H.V.

BELGIUM. By John Eppstein. RUMANIA. By C. Kormos. British Survey Handbooks. (Cambridge University Press; 3s. each.)

'Hungary is Catholic, Rumania is not. So Transylvania, with its Catholic majority, should go back to Hungary.' 'No. Everything Hitler does is wrong. Therefore, the Vienna Award should be reversed.' 'Russia is bolshevik; so Bessarabia must be part of Rumania.' 'No. Bessarabia is more Slav than Rumanian: it must revert to Russia.' 'Rumania supported the Axis, so give the southern Dobruja to Bulgaria.' 'Bulgaria supported the Axis, so give the southern Dobruja to Rumania.'

There is far too much of that sort of talk going on. It isn't all of it attributable to the passions and prejudices of sects, contentions and envies. Plain ignorance is responsible for a lot—and not always culpable ignorance: after all, the problems of Europe are not exactly simple, and what the Rusins are or where Latgallen is does not simply leap to the eye. But some of that ignorance has got to be remedied if there is to be a public opinion on foreign policy

and affairs worth tuppence, or even a roughly exact notion of what happens on the continent.

The second of the above books really helps where one country is concerned. A good proportion of it is history—more than usually necessary when we find that for the solution of the Transylvanian dispute both Rumania and Hungary appeal to events, or alleged events, of up to sixteen hundred years ago. And there is as well geography and topography, economics and recent politics, religions and nationalities. The reader can find out something about Transylvania and the Regat, Bessarabia and the Bukovina, the Dobruja and the Banat, the Szekelys and the Saxons of the Ardeal, and who are the chief beneficiaries of Rumania's natural wealth—and they all mean a different problem. Mr. Kormos is apparently a Rumanian: but he does not gloss over Rumania's treatment of her minorities, particularly in Bessarabia, or the shocking corruption of Rumanian politics and administration; nor does he assail Hungary with abuse or question-begging epithets—he does not assail her at all.

This book is No. 2 of a new series, British Survey Handbooks, prepared by the British Society for International Understanding. Mr. Eppstein's *Belgium* is No. 1, and we say less about it than about No. 2 because far fewer Englishmen have been to Bukarest or Oradea Mare than to Knocke and Heyst, Ostend and Blankenberghe, Bruges and Brussels. But it is in every way as good and as well written as Mr. Kormos's book. It can be specially recommended to those in this country who 'fell for' Degrelle and his Rexistes, so many of whom six years later were numbered among the traitors. (The 'Catholic fallacy' again—they were named from *Christus Rex*.)

This series looks like having all the virtues and value of the British Survey leaflets, which in their line are the best and most reliable popularisations that the war has occasioned. The volumes are particularly intended to be carried in the pocket when abroad—nothing could be better.

D.D.A.

LETTRE DE NUIT : LA NUIT DONNEE. Par Raissa Maritain. (Editions de L'Arbre. n.p.)

These verses of Mme. Maritain's are for the most part *vers d'occasion*, now dealing in an unrealising way and through conventional symbols with the surfaces of life and now exploring the problems of the spirit. There is scarcely any attempt to create an idiom, Mme. Maritain being content (except possibly in the half-surrealist *Nocturne*) with a prose faithfulness to her experience, which has its vices in the lack of realisation of

' Les arbres à ma fenêtre  
Font un lacs de ramilles grises  
Et leurs troncs en robe verte  
Sont des colonnes de poésie '