

charged with mutual resentment, the issuance of a work in which Poland's relations with her eastern neighbor bulk so large on this date may very well be not entirely uninspired.

This is called the first volume of the *Cambridge History of Poland* and is chronologically speaking, though the second appeared in 1941 and was hailed as a triumph of spirit over matter, the spirit having been supplied mainly by the late Professor Reddaway, whose superhuman will and energy alone were the factors that drove the work to completion through the period of England's gravest peril. The death of Professor Reddaway while the present volume was in progress left the project without a soul and with no steersman, as is readily to be sensed when one begins appraising the present work and comparing it with the earlier volume.

Poland's first 700 years of national existence need desperately to be set forth, and above all interpreted, for the English-reading public. In this volume we have all the details but a minimum of interpretation, so that when one comes to the end he has a feeling of frustration. Only in such rare chapters as Professor Boswell's on "Cultural and Social Conditions in the Middle Ages" does the picture emerge from the materials used in its manufacture: in most cases there are only the materials, scholars writing monographs for each other to read. Especially in the crucial period of the first king, Bolesław I, Chrobry, who was a contemporary of Otto III (early tenth century), should we have liked a viewing of the scene as it were from above, some clear analysis of the period's central significance such as Professor Dvornik gives us in his recent *Making of Central and Eastern Europe*. To understand Poland's mood today we must understand the period of Chrobry, yet no understanding is to be had from Professor Kętrzyński's long and detailed chapter. And what an opportunity for pointing out the influence of English thought on Polish was missed in the same chapter by the author's too rigid adherence to demonstrable evidence in his handling of the Bolesław II-Bishop Stanisław duel; what a chance lost to show the long significance

of this duel, which raised one of the permanently vital "great issues" of Polish history!

As a reference book, the present volume will perform a service, and certain chapters, like Professor Halecki's dealing with the Jagiellonian Idea and that of Professor Nowak on the period of Batory, will be turned to often, as shedding light from the past on the present. But on the whole the volume is disappointing, and nowhere more so than in its total disregard of any single system of spelling. In the other volume of the same work, a system was followed which made the Polish names intelligible. In this we have Jagello, Jagiełło, Jagellonian, Jagiellonian, and, horror of horrors! Jagiełlonian; even the expert is in a fair way to lose his mind over this; what the uninitiated but aspiring learner, for whom presumably the work is written, will do, one can only imagine.

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#### WESTERN CONTINENTAL EUROPE

DURANT, WILL. *The Age of Faith: A History of Medieval Civilization—Christian, Islamic, and Judaic—from Constantine to Dante: A.D. 325–1300*. Pp. xviii, 1198. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950. \$7.50.

This monumental work would be in itself a great tribute to its brilliant creator, but when we view it as the fourth volume in a set of six projected, with four already in print, we must take off our hats, as the Europeans say. Even the professional historians should show their respect for the enormous industry and knowledge displayed by the author. He has written beautifully about a period in European history that is difficult to understand for the modern mind. Will Durant has told us correctly and pleasantly how much real darkness there was in the so-called Dark Ages. That constitutes a great achievement. Moreover, he has revealed a wealth of facts concerning medieval science and art that needed sympathetic and illuminating interpretation.

Particularly comprehensive is the treat-

ment of the Mohammedans and the Jews in the Middle Ages. Nearly every reader will welcome this departure from the fashionable technique of our well-known textbooks. Another refreshing innovation is the use of unfamiliar chapter headings, such as the following: "The Talmud," "The Rise of the North," "The Economic Revolution," "The Recovery of Europe," and "Christian Science." Occasionally, however, a discerning critic might question the wisdom of giving too much or too little space to certain topics. Why should Peter Abelard have a whole chapter, for example, and Thomas Aquinas only part of a chapter? And why do we need a section on the Armenians in the chapter on the recovery of Europe, since the country in which they lived was not a part of Europe?

The present reviewer is pleased to note that the writer has repudiated a view now widely taught in this country by professional historians, namely, that in the period from 1300 to 1500 medieval civilization was subject to a general and widespread decline. The unfortunate view of the "waning of the Middle Ages" has done much harm during the past twenty years. That is why the following sentence on page 1085 of Durant's book should prove a most helpful corrective: "We shall never do justice to the Middle Ages until we see the Italian Renaissance not as their repudiation but as their fulfillment." Another hopeful sign is the title chosen for Volume V in Durant's great work: *The Renaissance and the Reformation*. There are among us at this particular moment a number of historians who do not even dare to use the name Italian Renaissance. They talk with enthusiasm about the Medieval Renaissance and the Medieval Reformation, but they see the Middle Ages ending with so great a lack of culture that the movements popularly known as the Renaissance and the Reformation fade away into the realm of oblivion. Let us hope that Durant in his fifth volume will give proper credit to the great forces which at the dawn of modern civilization produced a real renovation of classical learning and an actual reformation in religion.

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KORDT, ERICH. *Nicht aus den Akten*. Pp. 441. Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1950. DM 14.

Erich Kordt's first postwar book, *Wahn und Wirklichkeit (Delusion and Reality)*, which analyzed Hitler's foreign policy from the viewpoint of an upper civil servant having access to the documents, quickly became a best-seller in Germany. It has remained a standard work on the subject. The present volume, *Nicht aus den Akten (Not From the Documents)*, is a more personalized account of the Wilhelmstrasse from 1928 to 1945. It gives a remarkable eyewitness picture of the unstable members of Hitler's immediate entourage as well as the fantastic story of Nazi malice in wonderland. It reads like a novel of intrigue.

Erich Kordt held various posts in the German Foreign Office from the 1920's on, and later, as an important official, took part in high-level conferences and state visits. He met statesmen and dictators in both Germany and other countries. He was in an advantageous position to observe what really went on behind the facade of Nazism.

Almost as fascinating as Churchill's account of his visit to Moscow is Kordt's account of the nightly symposia in the Golden Tartar's Hall of the Kremlin during the negotiations between Germans and Russians at the end of September, 1939. Equally as absorbing is Kordt's report of the disappearance in the Far East of the "master spy," Richard Sorge. This explanation gives us a good insight into the working methods of the Soviet secret service.

Above all, Kordt gives a devastating description of the character and ability of Ribbentrop, the former champagne salesman who worked himself into the Fuehrer's inner circle and promptly proceeded to make an unholy mess of Germany's foreign policy. When Ribbentrop in 1937 went to Rome for the ceremony of signing the anti-Comintern Pact, he devoted most of his energy to making certain that he, as the "substitute for the Fuehrer," be properly placed at the table (pp. 171-172). Kordt states that Ribbentrop's reports to Hitler were "filled with obscenities and absurdities and