

of the first half of the century. All this is very well presented. It is informative and unpretentious.

BUT IF, with our initial conception of scales to be evenly balanced, we expect to find strictures on Dostoevsky for failing where Tolstoy so notably succeeded we shall be seriously disappointed. By this point in the book Mr. Steiner is beginning to slide surreptitiously into the saddle of his chosen horse. He has taken sides, though we may not recognise this until near the end; and henceforth the whole trend of his argument will be more and more weighted against Tolstoy.

Yet there *is*, of course, a criticism to be made of Dostoevsky in the terms we were expecting. There *are* moments in these great but flawed novels when the characters leave the ground so far below them that we can no longer accept their reality—in any of the many senses of an ambiguous word. And equally it is true that there are many moments in Tolstoy—moments, in particular, of extraordinary joy—when the nature of human experience is being explored in the profoundest terms we can conceive of. It is true that Tolstoy's politics were naïve—but so were Dostoevsky's. Yet Tolstoy's are used against him by Mr. Steiner while Dostoevsky's are dismissed as irrelevant. And when Mr. Steiner finds immense and loaded significance in the fact that Soviet Russia has accepted Tolstoy and, until recently, rejected Dostoevsky, he is really using the argument of guilt by association. (Not that popularity in modern Russia would seem to me to carry the least suggestion of inadequacy—or of merit either.)

As for the first answer which I have suggested to the implied question of Mr. Steiner's title, he seems to dismiss it in a single sentence. "The tenor of their respective greatness and its forms of being set them irremediably at odds." This implies that those merits which each writer exclusively possessed are *by their nature* incompatible. But need we believe that this is so? Mustn't we, in fact, believe that it need not be so, and that it has not invariably been so? There is, of course, a great deal of Dostoevsky which could never have appeared anywhere in Shakespeare. But in *Timon*, in *Hamlet*, in *Lear* and *Troilus and Cressida* there is as much of Dostoevsky's unique perception as the period allowed. Just as there is much of the true greatness of Tolstoy in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Othello*, *Henry the Fifth*, and *Twelfth Night*.

And even if this dubious appeal to the greatest authority should be rejected, it still remains true that there is nothing necessarily incompatible in the fundamental qualities of the two writers. Of course if one believes in original sin one

cannot simultaneously believe in human perfectability (though the dramatic element in all great literature does not exclude this possibility so rigorously as the more literal-minded critics might suppose). But if we are thinking in terms of epic and drama, of optimism and pessimism, of the world within and the world without, the ethical and the existential, then the incompatibility lies only in the apparent limitations of the individual human temperament. But art can and does transcend the temperamental limitations of the artist. A reconciliation of these attitudes, or at least their meaningful juxtaposition, should be the object of every ambitious writer.

Philip Toynbee

The Messianic Heresy

Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase. By J. L. TALMON. *Secker & Warburg*. 50s.

PROFESSOR Talmon's *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* has become a landmark in the discussion of revolutionary movements. His new volume, a massive sequel to the earlier work, carries the story and the argument a step further. The *Origins* presented a critique of the radical ideas which came to the surface in the French Revolution, and an analysis of political tendencies inherent in the sects which sprang from the collapse of Jacobinism. Now we are given a picture of the Europe that arose from the double impact of the industrial revolution and the French Revolution. This broadening of the canvas carries with it a shift from ideological to material considerations, but for the most part Dr. Talmon provides a history of ideas during the period under review—roughly the years between Waterloo and the upheaval of 1848. Given the programmatic character of almost all political thinking in this age, the emphasis on ideology is doubtless justified, but it leads to some awkwardness when in a separate chapter the attempt is made to bring the industrial revolution into the picture.

It is no criticism of Professor Talmon's earlier work to say that it had something to do with promoting the conservative outlook of the decade that lies behind us. The Western world in the 1950's bore some resemblance to Europe in the 1850's—both had witnessed a revolutionary upheaval and were busy digesting the fruit. We are still pondering the outcome of the Russian

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LONGMANS

Revolution, whereas a century earlier it was a case of trying to come to grips simultaneously with the 1848 upheaval, and with the lessons of the earlier cataclysm in France. Such considerations are not extraneous to Professor Talmon's work, for it is his thesis that the revolutionary movements of our time are still dominated by the forces unleashed between 1789 and 1848. This is not an altogether novel view, but it has never been documented quite so exhaustively. For the period between 1815 and 1848, at any rate, we now have what is likely to become a standard history of the movement of ideas which accompanied—and possibly determined—the course of events from the Restoration to the democratic revolution.

Here then is *Geistesgeschichte* in the European manner, combined with the more orthodox political history taught in British and American universities. The fusion operates at a level which, whatever may be thought of the author's conclusions, is relevant to the ideas of his *dramatis personæ*. If anything can render neo-conservatism intellectually respectable, it is writing of this kind, at once scholarly and frankly partisan. For it must be stressed that this book is, within the limits of academic objectivity and candour, a highly critical account of the Romantic epoch. Professor Talmon is in a tradition: that suggested by the names of Burke and Tocqueville (his temper, fortunately, is Tocqueville's rather than Burke's). Though scrupulously fair to all the contending schools of thought—indeed almost excessively ready to expound at length the wild lucubrations of poets like Mickiewicz and muddled prosaists like Mazzini—he is out of sympathy with most of them. Except for Constant, Guizot, and Tocqueville (the apostles of French liberalism in this period), and Humboldt (its leading German defender), there are no deities in his pantheon. Almost all the other thinkers of the age, from the conservative nationalist Fichte, via the Catholic democrat Lamennais, to the early socialists, were, he thinks, touched by the Messianic heresy: believing themselves to be in possession of infallible panaceas and unique revelations vouchsafed only to the elect, they were ready to wield the sword and make short work of infidels. And this aberration, which he believes to lie at the root of all political fanaticism, Professor Talmon finds it difficult to forgive.

Now it could be argued that the only people who in actual fact conducted large-scale massacres, when finally given the opportunity in 1848, were the highly conservative Austrian rulers, and in France the orthodox Republican Cavaignac and his fellow-liberals; while the

Romantic revolutionaries for the most part contented themselves with stirring manifestos. But as Dr. Talmon is concerned with the ideology of revolution rather than with its reality—although the events of 1848–50 are analysed in a concluding section—this objection would not meet the case. For there is no denying that on the eve of 1848, socialist and nationalist aims alike were formulated in utopian language by all the radical sects of the time. It took the débâcle of 1848–50 to bring about the collapse of political Romanticism, or in Dr. Talmon's terminology, Messianism. (He has a valuable section on the Jewish ingredient in the Saint-Simonian movement.) That being so, the case may be regarded as proved, though what exactly this has to do with the issue of totalitarianism is another matter. It has never been evident to all readers of Dr. Talmon that "totalitarian democracy" was more than a Rousseauist fantasy. In his new work, while he has brought to light a great many interesting quotations from the socialist and nationalist literature of the period, it is by no means easy to follow him in his insistence that the heirs of the Jacobins were distinguished by a set of beliefs which was at once democratic—in the sense of stressing popular sovereignty—and totalitarian. If all anti-liberal tendencies are brought together under a single heading, it is indeed possible to establish some sort of unified pattern, but only at the cost of lumping together people and ideas that had little to do with each other: e.g., Fichte's conservative authoritarianism and the radical utopianism of the early socialists. Many of the latter had a Catholic background, and totalitarianism was, so to speak, bred into their system. Fichte's and Hegel's state-worship on the other hand, though objectionable enough by modern liberal standards, can be described as totalitarian only by emptying the term of its meaning. As for Marx, he evidently occupies a kind of watershed between the Romantic age and its aftermath, and any assessment that ignores his later role must go seriously astray.

On the whole, Professor Talmon's best chapters are those on the Saint-Simonian movement, and on the Romantic democrats and nationalists, from Michelet to Mazzini. He is more at home with the heirs of the French Revolution than with their opponents across the Rhine. It is a possible criticism of his work that he makes the Germans sound too much like Frenchmen, when in fact they were consciously dissociating themselves from Parisian models. With the Italians and Poles he has the simpler task of showing that their nationalism was fed by the secularisation of religion, and conse-

quently developed a Messianic strain. Mickiewicz was quite sure that the restoration of Poland would help to resurrect other nations and benefit the world as a whole (he also thought that Napoleon was the precursor of the Messiah). For Mazzini, God and "the people" were two sides of the same historical coin. The later Saint-Simonians, on the other hand, expected salvation to come from the Orient, in the shape of a young woman. All this is very entertaining, and makes it easier to understand the Paris of Balzac, in which George Sand and Victor Hugo were taken seriously as social prophets. But it does not establish the case for "political Messianism" as an identifiable force dominating the age and shaping its conflicts, even when we are told that

the salvationist scheme of political Messianism easily coalesced with the tradition of totalitarian democracy bequeathed by the French Revolution. The postulates were the same, and the ultimate conclusions not dissimilar, though the terms of reference were different.

What is indubitable is that the age witnessed the beginning of that secularisation of religion which later spread to Eastern Europe and has now become a world-wide phenomenon. But the particular problem of totalitarianism has to do with the role of the state in modern society, and on this point Professor Talmon's analysis does not give enough weight to the difference between pre-liberal and post-liberal conditions.

THE JACOBIN EXPERIMENT was wrecked, more than by anything else, by the clash between classical mythology and modern reality (or as Marx put it, by the Jacobin attempt to superimpose Roman costumes on bourgeois society). What saved the Bolsheviks from a similar fate was the pragmatic outlook which they unconsciously derived from the Victorian reaction against revolutionary Romanticism. But they were also the beneficiaries of a concurrent change in circumstances which for the first time made a planned "revolution from above" possible. The ability to cope with this opportunity they owed to Marxism, which grew from the wreckage of utopia in 1848, although its originator had one foot in each camp and was motivated more than he knew by apocalyptic strains embedded in his heritage. Notwithstanding a tendency to make too much of this theme, Professor Talmon has produced a notable sequel to his earlier work, and raised a standard to which conservative liberals and liberal conservatives can repair with equal confidence.

G. L. Arnold

A Non-Communist Manifesto

The Stages of Economic Growth. By W. W. Rostow. *Cambridge University Press.* 21s.

THE lectures given by Professor Rostow, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge in 1958, received a well-deserved publicity. Now, somewhat enlarged and revised, they are made available to a wider public. Though the Cisatlantic reader may find at certain times that Mr. Rostow's use of the English language induces a certain literary indigestion, he should be grateful for the clarity and boldness of the thought. The argument and the historical examples are always interesting, and there are valuable insights into economic and social processes. The third and fourth chapters, which discuss the concept of "take-off" and the necessary preconditions for it, are especially valuable.

Though Mr. Rostow is an economic historian, he intended to contribute to the understanding of a wider range of problems than the purely economic. His sub-title is "A non-Communist manifesto," and in the last chapter he appears to wish to set up a theoretical alternative to Marxism. His criticisms of Marxian economic theory, though not very startling, are certainly plausible. But Marxism, as he of course well knows, is more than an economic theory, and a "non-Communist manifesto" suggests more than economic criticism, indeed appears to promise a new ideology. Whether the world needs such a thing is a matter of opinion, but it can hardly be claimed that this book provides it. It is equally clear that Mr. Rostow is here concerned with more than economic history, that he is trying to give a broad survey and explanation of the whole process of the modernisation of society in the industrial age, the process which began in 18th-century England and is now transforming most of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This process has social, political, and military aspects, of which the author shows himself well aware. Yet even a brief survey of such complex phenomena, affecting countries and societies of immensely different historical experience and cultural heritage, requires greater space, and above all more precisely defined terminology, than Mr. Rostow can offer his readers. The uneven treatment of the problems, and haphazard selection of examples, make a systematic review impossible. All that can here be attempted are some comments on some non-economic aspects.

Probably the most widely discussed of Mr. Rostow's points has been his claim that his fourth stage—the drive from take-off to maturity—has, in all the cases examined, taken about the same length of time, about sixty years. He