

the help of new learning brought life to theology in his time; and at the end of this fascinating book may find ourselves asking whether the scientific world-view can do for us what Aristotle did for the thirteenth century. Perhaps it can; perhaps (as others have suggested) we shall have to wait until we have assimilated more of the philosophic wisdom of the East.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

THE PROPHET ARMED: Trotsky 1879-1921. By Isaac Deutscher. (Oxford; 30s.)

As epigraph to this first volume of his life of Trotsky Mr Deutscher quotes Machiavelli on the obstacles encountered by innovators: 'All armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed'. And certainly this first volume is the story of a conquering hero, from his taking command of the revolutionary Soviet in 1905 to his organization, almost single-handed, of the Red Army during the civil war. His arms were his skill in oratory, he was a very great orator; his power as a writer, he was the greatest of the Marxist writers; and his undoubted flair for administration to which Lenin bore witness. The one arm that he lacked, and the arm that was to bring about his fall and his banishment, was his inability to judge persons and above all his miscalculation, due in large measure to personal hostility, of Stalin. Prophet he certainly was—witness the remarkable insight in the view expressed in 1904 of the direction in which the party would move: 'The caucus substitutes itself for the party; then the Central Committee for the caucus; and finally a dictator substitutes himself for the Central Committee'.

Mr Deutscher, using the private papers of Trotsky which are now preserved at the Houghton Library of Harvard University, does full justice to this fascinating story—though one could have dispensed with the *longueurs* of the journalistic squabbles of the emigrés in the fourteen years before the October Revolution—and restores Trotsky to his rightful position in Russian history from which Soviet 'official history' has completely eliminated him. He shows how the tragedy began when Trotsky threw in his lot with Lenin in 1917, despite an instinctive repugnance for his ideas (Trotsky had always supported the mystique of the Soviet against the Party) which had kept him in opposition to the Bolsheviks from the split in the Party congress in 1903. It may be that this repugnance had its roots in the incompatibility of the Jew who had his links with the Western world and the closed Russian minds of Lenin and Stalin. But this does not emerge from Mr Deutscher's work, massive though it is. For he is too concerned with the 'dynamics of history', with the Russian working class which he

describes as 'one of history's wonders', and with his own interpretation of pre-1917 Russian history. Nevertheless, the gigantic figure of Trotsky comes through, and his tragedy is the tragedy of Europe and indeed of the world.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

THE OVERREACHER: A Study of Christopher Marlowe. By Harry Levin. (Faber and Faber; 2 IS.)

Overreaching, as the attempt to ignore or overpass the confines of traditional moral and intellectual experience, is seen here as the central theme of Marlowe's plays, and of his own life and character. Professor Levin explores the implications of the word he has revived in his title, through a detailed and sensitive exposition of Marlowe's verse. He examines the way in which the hyperbole of the language creates the superb, monstrously self-assertive figures of the dramas. Woven into the close textual study are references to the literary and historical background of the period, and its moral and theological traditions in the light of which overreaching, as a form of pride, must be understood.

The study moves rather too easily at times between literary criticism and biographical comment, so it is made to appear that the extravagances of Marlowe's own life and opinions, and the excessive appetites of his dramatic figures, are part of the same spectacle. The characteristics of the plays are suggested by the anatomizing of Marlowe's own character. Thus, Professor Levin neatly summarizes the main themes of the plays, but presents them as the appetites of Marlowe himself:

'The unholy trinity of Marlowe's heresies, violating the taboos of medieval orthodoxy, was an affirmation of the strongest drives that animated the Renaissance and have shaped our modern outlook. In the stricter categories of theology, his Epicureanism might have been *libido sentiendi*, the appetite for sensation; his Machiavellianism might have been *libido dominandi*, the will to power; and his Atheism *libido sciendi*, the zeal for knowledge. Singly and in combination he dramatized these ideas. . . .'

Marlowe himself becomes a figure from his own tragedies.

That Marlowe himself may have proclaimed that he was an atheist and a libertine, and shocked some of his contemporaries by the intemperance of his behaviour and conversation, is of course of some interest; but I doubt if it is so essential for a full understanding of the plays as Professor Levin seems to suggest. Faustus's deliberate rejection of grace, as conceived by Marlowe in its whole dramatic context, is a very different spectacle from that of Marlowe's own wild life. The play presents sin and suffering in moral proportions which are not