

by Leon Cristiani and Jean Rilliet (Sands, 1960), in dialogue form between a Priest and a Pastor; *The Unfinished Reformation*, by Hans Asmussen and others (Fowler Wright Books, 40s.), a series of essays by Lutheran writers giving an insight into Protestant ecumenical thinking.

The Council and Reunion by Hans Küng (Sheed & Ward, Stagbooks, 11s. 6d.). This is a quite remarkable book and will repay concentrated study and much thought. Professor Hans Küng is a forward looking theologian and is recommended as such in prefatory messages printed at the beginning of the book, from two Cardinals, French and German. This book has been criticized for dwelling too heavily on abuses and anomalies on the human side of the Church. Professor Küng is insistent on the need of the Church continually to reform itself in accordance with its own teaching, the teaching of Christ, who is its head. He is pleading for a renewal of the life of the Church, for which the Holy Father himself has been asking in prayer and action since the beginning of his pontificate.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

Heard and Seen

WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

To those of us who occasionally feel, with some impatience, that a good deal of the energy expended on detecting latent communist threats could be more constructively employed in observing the dashing, elegant and effective fashion in which the Poles walk their tightrope of co-existence, a glance at the Polish cinema today can be quite illuminating. And with two new Polish films appearing for commercial runs on the London screens in less than a month, a Polish Film Week last autumn, and the odd Polish film turning up at sporadic intervals all over the place in the last year or so, there really is sufficient evidence available on which to base a reasonable assessment of the spirit and output of the Polish studios.

The first thing that strikes one is the difference between Polish films and those from Russia or indeed even from other satellite states. Sophisticated intelligent, unimpressed, gay sometimes to the point of frivolity, often tragic but almost never portentous, mannered perhaps but seldom sentimental, the dominant note is far more off-French than near-Marxist. The Polish sense of the ridiculous, the inconsequent, crops up in the most surprising contexts, and this ability to draw a pungent comment largely through the opposition of incongruities is what saves Polish films from that ponderous solemnity which is the bane of so much cinematic 'commitment'.

Of the two latest films to reach London from Poland, Andrzej Wajda's *Innocent Sorcerers* is a case in point. Full of jazz and jeans, scooters, electronic gadgets and guitars, it is as with it as they come, and the endearingly uncertain hero and heroine, played by the blond Lomnicki and a charming creature called Krystyna Stypulkowska, would be quite at home in St Germain or San Francisco. It is a study of personal relationships not of political ones, and particularly of personal relationships complicated by youth, inexperience and a timidity both social and psychological. It is funny, touching, delightful to look at cinematically, and every now and then brushes lightly over a really serious implication; the despair of the boxer forbidden to fight, for instance, or the mixed reactions of relief and chagrin on the girl's face when, in the strip-poker type game, the young man does not exact the full penalty of his winning lead.

Wajda has so far been chiefly known in this country as director of the war trilogy of *A Generation*, *Kanal* and the enormously exciting *Ashes and Diamonds*. These films deal with the problems of youth, certainly, but of youth faced by the cruelly specific problems of war and occupation—ideological confusion, conflicting loyalties and the destruction of any established patterns of behaviour. That he should be able to turn from these ruthless expositions of loss, death and insoluble dilemmas, to something as real, witty and contemporary as *Innocent Sorcerers* using, as it were, the same kind of characters in as limited a frame of plot and background to produce a totally different cinematic result, is another proof of this young director's high talent. That this film is not a biological sport in the evolution of the Polish cinema can be proved by reference to the unforgettable *Two Men and a Wardrobe* or the highly enjoyable *See You Tomorrow*, which was a kind of co-operative effort by several of the young actors, Kobiela and Cybulski amongst them.

Ashes and Diamonds was a brave film, because it refused to affirm that 'we' were right and 'they' were wrong; everybody was crazy and mixed-up and nobody won. Ideologically it must have shocked the *culturny* pundits in Moscow terribly; what they can have thought about *Zeżowate Szczęście* (which eventually reached this country as *Cross-eyed Luck*) is hardly imaginable. This painful odyssey of a Polish Jack who *never* contrived to be all right, since he consistently took the wrong side from the beginning of the war through to post-war party dissensions, is brilliantly satirical, pulls no punches and has some sly cinematic jokes as well as broad political ones. Too long by western standards, it was yet well worth seeing and seemed to me a dangerous piece of gratuitous defiance, even during a thaw.

The Poles make almost as many war films as do the British, but though obsessed with the period they are curiously detached about the part they themselves played in it. We are only now beginning to admit that all that glitters may not be sterling British, but in a film like *Eroica* (directed by Andrzej Munk, whose recent tragic death in a car crash is an irreparable loss), the director's point of view is coolly dispassionate. The first part of Munk's diptych shows the Warsaw Rising through the eyes of a cowardly spiv who is forced by

circumstance into a kind of heroism; the second explores with a clinical compassion the difference between the mind of the professional and amateur soldier, when they confront each other in a prison camp. Not in anyway a comfortable film, it is as many worlds away from *The Battle of the River Plate* as it is from the *Ballad of a Soldier*; one is left with the impression of an extremely adult piece of work. Indeed this is one of the most noticeable characteristics of the Polish cinema. In *Pociąg (Night Train)* for instance, what might have been a pretty conventional thriller is completely transformed by the character of the doctor who is the protagonist, and the interest one takes in his predicament quite overrides the irritation induced by the unusually overt propaganda. The amount of propaganda, or at least of explicit propaganda, is curiously small in most Polish pictures considering the weight of marxist influence there must necessarily be behind a state-controlled industry, fed from state-run and exceptionally good schools of cinematography. It is therefore all the more surprising to find the second Polish film to reach London this year, Kawalerowics' *Mother Joan of the Angels* so coldly anti-religious. It might even be a personal rather than an ideological bias, one feels, as it clearly is with Bunuel. Hardly a second-rate film—certainly not a boring one—has washed up on our screens from Poland over the last five years or so; of what other film-producing country of comparable output can one say so much?

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

Reviews

EASTERN CHRISTENDOM, by Nicolas Zernov; Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 42s.

EASTERN CATHOLIC LITURGIES, text by Nicholas Leisel; photographs by N. Makula; foreword by Donald Attwater; Sands; 35s.

Dr Zernov's book is subtitled 'A Study of the Origin and Development of the Eastern Orthodox Church'. The volume forms part of a series entitled 'History of Religions', and the approach is thus basically historical.

It may be surmised that there are few writers indeed in the English-speaking world who are capable of doing what the author has done for us in this volume with such a degree of historical competence and spiritual insight. With it he has supplied a very real deficiency in the definitely sparse available literature in English concerning Eastern Christendom, and his work will be valued both as a most useful work of reference, and also as an attractively-written account