

most people apprehend such situations, I cannot see the average cinema audience—even a French one—getting down to the real cerebral effort needed to come to terms with all its surprises.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

Reviews

RELIGION IN THE SOVIET UNION, by Walter Kolarz; Macmillan; 50s.

GOD AND THE SOVIETS, by Constantin de Grunwald, translated by G. J. Robinson-Paskevsky; Hutchinson; 30s.

Mr Kolarz has produced the best documented work to appear so far on the history of religion under the Soviet government. His enumeration of even the wildest sects is exhaustive, and he provides a careful estimate of the present strength of each religious body, the losses it has undergone, and its chances of survival or increase.

Mr Kolarz argues that there has been as yet no real change in the direction of communist policy. The kinder attitude of Stalin's post-war years and of the collective leadership after his death has won for the Soviet government far more than it has lost. After the war the co-operation of at least the vocal parts of the Patriarchal Church made easier the absorption into the Union of countries with an Orthodox population. Since then loud claims and very limited concessions to the freedom of religious worship have provided Soviet diplomacy the appearances it needed so badly for its work abroad.

Inevitably some cry that the leopard has changed its spots. One such is M. de Grunwald. A Russian by birth, with his home in Paris, he has made a tour of the Soviet Union and now records the conversations he has had in railway carriages or across the luncheon table with church officials and pious believers. It is a flash photograph, not a study in depth. Of course it would be foolish to suppose that M. de Grunwald's fairly rosy picture of life in Russia comes from informants who were altogether and consciously insincere. Conditions are better now than they have been within most people's memory, and it is possible to hope for improvement. Besides, standards of religious freedom are different *toto caelo* from what they are here or in France.

It is difficult to do more than sound this general warning about M. de Grunwald's book without going into detail. One small example may be enough to show how easy it is for a casual observer to give, or be given, a false impression of the facts. M. de Grunwald is duly impressed with the *Journal of the Moscow*

Patriarchate when he meets its editor in his 'spacious suite of offices'. But he does not point out, or is not told, that the *Journal* is published in numbers that can hardly work out at more than one copy a parish, and that its contents are limited mainly to formal announcements, congratulatory messages and endless diatribes on peace. There is never a breath of criticism of any aspect of the Soviet government, and rarely anything that could be called a serious discussion on a question of topical interest, or anything that could be taken as an answer to the vast spate of anti-religious literature that is on sale everywhere in the Soviet Union.

It is possible for a serious student to take a hopeful view of the future of religion in the Soviet Union. Mr Kolarz is particularly sane in a field where others leave fancy and optimism to run wild. He looks to the survival of religion among the young and the consequent pressure upon communists to revise their view of religion as an off-shoot of class. The nearer Russia approaches to a society free from class in the traditional sense, the more obvious will be the danger of there appearing a new suppressed class of citizens, and even nations, whose disqualification is their religious belief. Mr Kolarz hopes that communists will relax their insistence on atheist uniformity for the sake of the other half of their ideal, a society of equal human beings.

The trouble is that Russians have drawn ideas from the West in plenty, but never the liberalism needed to prevent these ideas taking on a stiff, dogmatic form. The very idea of revision would need a real effort. The other tragedy is that the Church in Russia has never been much concerned to apply the Christian faith to the values of this world, and she has scarcely the opportunity, or the force within herself, to do so now. We should be prepared therefore to face the other side of Mr Kolarz's coin. The more successful communists are in achieving maximum economic efficiency, the more energy they may find for pursuing their less practical aims.

DENIS O'BRIEN

COMMON SENSE ABOUT RACE, by Philip Mason.

COMMON SENSE ABOUT CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, by C. H. Rolph;
Gollancz; 12s. 6d. each.

The subject-matter of these two books has, we may think, been discussed more than enough in the last few years. But they are subjects of continuing importance, and much of the discussion in newspapers and periodicals is superficial or confined to a single aspect. We need a brief but balanced exposition of the fundamental issues, written by an expert for the ordinary reader.

Philip Mason has fulfilled this need admirably. He speaks from expert knowledge and experience; he is concerned not just with this country but with a world-wide problem, and he writes very well indeed. In the first half of the