

tion. One can only list such things as a moving late self-portrait of Van Gogh's, two noble pictures by Cézanne, a tropically rich painting by Rousseau, and two early works of Matisse, with all his unique mastery of colour. P.W.

### La Dolce Vita

IN the latest issue of the *Revue Internationale du Cinéma*, the journal of the international Catholic cinema office, there is an article on the moral assessment of certain recent co-production films, as applied in various national centres. This demonstrates how the same film may get very different ratings from country to country: when we see that *La Dolce Vita* has been put into the 'à proscrire' category in Italy, the point is well taken. For now that it has reached the commercial screen in England it is difficult, from the Anglo-Saxon point of view, to see what all the fuss was about. From this side of the Channel it looks even more like a scathing moral indictment of a way of living that may be over-stated but is, as we all know, true enough in its essentials. Signor Fellini has said in a London interview that the Rome he has portrayed is his *idea* of Rome, not necessarily the true Rome; but this is no more, after all, than any creator's way with his material and need not in any way surprise us.

This long film, whose spatial control is so precise and whose temporal control is often so slack, sprawls across nearly three hours in a series of episodes whose visual attack frequently packs a much heavier punch than their intellectual content. From the first moment when the helicopter bears down upon the Roman suburbs, with the statue of Christ the Worker slung beneath it—ruined viaduct and bare tenement wall taking the statue's shadow like a stigmata—Fellini's sheer cinematic virtuosity imposes itself without question. This is essentially a film about boredom, and the excesses to which boredom allied to wealth commonly leads, but the arabesques in which Fellini wheels and guides his visual images leave the spectator bored only when the director's message takes precedence over his eye. So the second orgy seems endless whereas the first, with its fantastic procession led by a most ambiguous and decorative character—a little beatnik blonde witch-like in the great baroque helmet she suddenly puts on—is of a breathtaking if corrupt beauty. The reporter, Marcello, is the connecting link between all the sequences and, like Hamlet, he is most dreadfully attended. A horde of press photographers, like Furies, batten and scavenge in his wake, sparing no grief and respecting no privacy. Marcello—weak, sensual, not without charm and the natural affections (there is real compassion for his father in the most moving of the episodes)—has an ineffectual desire to be a better man, but it is too late: evil communications have finally corrupted manners that can never have been very good. Neither his phoney intellectual friends, whom he characteristically takes to be genuine, nor the little country girl who is the one truly innocent creature in the film, can wean him from the bootlegger's hooch of his Via Veneto life. We leave him on the shore in the cruel light of dawn under the cold observation of a dying sea-monster's level gaze while across sundering water the little waitress beckons an invita-

tion to which he sadly realizes he may not respond. If this be *la dolce vita*, one feels, sackcloth and ashes would be gay in comparison and this, clearly, is what Fellini intends one to feel. The untidiness, the length, the extravagance that Fellini has not brought himself to prune prevent this film from being a real masterpiece of cinematic art, but it is wonderfully interesting and its very abundance give it a special quality: but harmful to an 'X'-certificate audience? Surely not.

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## REVIEWS

VATICAN DIPLOMACY. By Robert Graham, s.j. (Princeton University Press: London; Oxford University Press; 60s.)

In this study Father Graham sets out to show that the sending and receiving of diplomatic representatives by the Holy See is neither an outmoded survival from the Middle Ages nor a usurpation by the Church of powers that properly belong only to the state, but rather the 'ordinary and particularly apt instrument' of negotiation between Church and State on the international plane, in full accordance with the accepted principles of international law, public canon law and constitutional law.

His approach is pragmatic and historical. First he gives a profile of the machinery of Papal Diplomacy as it is today and a sketch of the Papal Secretariat of State and the Congregations of the Roman Curia, together with a detailed account of the origin and development of some of the non-Catholic and Catholic diplomatic missions to the Holy See, from the arrival of permanent Venetian ambassadors in the fifteenth century to the despatch of Sir Henry Howard in 1914. In doing this, he quotes freely from diplomatic documents consulted during the four years of research in Europe with which he prepared for the writing of this work.

Then, having established the facts, he surveys the development of the legal position of the Pope as it has appeared to writers on public international law, public canon law, and comparative constitutional law, paying special attention to the last two hundred years. His approach is historical rather than legal, and he brings out clearly the vast improvement which has taken place in the Pope's position in the international sphere.

Two hundred years ago the Church was generally subjected to the State, even in Catholic countries, on the theoretical ground that sovereignty was indivisible, and all communications between the faithful and the Holy See had to pass through a government department. The Pope was widely thought of as a foreign ruler, and was involved in wars by his possession of the Papal States, while the French government successfully insisted that all communication between the Vatican and the countries of the Middle and Far East should be carried on through their representatives.

Now, having escaped from the embarrassment of the Papal states, the Pope is thought of primarily as a spiritual sovereign, and can communicate