

recent controversy on televising the Mass drew forth some strong words by Karl Rahner, who in particular questioned the use of the Mass for purposes of proselytism. He demanded a certain 'metaphysical modesty' in making the Mass available to all, and recalled, for instance, the ridicule with which such a ceremony as the creation of new cardinals was received by unbelievers. In France the Mass is televised every Sunday, and the article has a searching analysis (of profit to producers in this country as well) of the difficulties involved, and of the danger of superficiality and the 'ersatz' presentation of a rite which essentially demands the sort of participation which television cannot create.

HEARD AND SEEN

The Ambassador's Choice

THE John Hay Whitney Collection of paintings in the possession of the outgoing American ambassador to London has for the last six weeks drawn crowds to the Tate Gallery, attracted perhaps by the legendary worth of a private collection such as could scarcely exist nowadays in England. And it must be admitted that these seventy pictures, mostly acquired in the ten years that followed the end of the war in 1945, have the patina of eminent acceptability. Apart from a stray Blake, two Zoffanys and a group of American paintings, they reflect the definitive arrival of the impressionists and post-impressionists as the artists most appropriate for embassy walls.

But Mr Whitney's choice is marvellously sound. As Sir John Rothensteiny remarks in his introduction to the catalogue (which is itself worthy of so magnificent an exhibition), the criterion has not been a mere 'programme', but rather the inherent quality of the actual painting. Thus Braque is, in the gallery sense, not at all well represented, but the two land- (or rather land-and-sea-) scapes of his *fauve* period in the collection are wonderful in their own right; one can at once see why they were bought, and how irrelevant it would be to insist that they should be 'matched' by his later work. Picasso, indeed, is represented by a splendid cubist *Homme Assis* as well as by a tender portrait of 1905, but once more it is the autonomous interest of the picture that matters. We feel that the whole collection, however 'safe' it may seem, is the vindication of the individual picture's right to please.

And of the pleasure there is no doubt with such things as a superb Derain painting of Charing Cross Bridge, which, placed at the far end of the last gallery, gives a dominating note of brilliant colour to the whole collec-

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-