Reviews

The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government, 1939–1949
by Dennis J. Dunn, East European Quarterly, Boulder. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York. East European Monograph No. XXX. Keston Book No. 10, 267 + viii pp. $21.25.

Dennis Dunn, who is Associate Professor of History at Southwest Texas University, USA, has written a much needed book. It is more than a history of a decade's relations between Stalin's Soviet Russia and the Vatican during the years of Pope Pius XII. The author describes concisely the historical background to the religious, cultural and political conflicts which characterize the relations of Orthodox, Byzantine Russia with the latinized and Roman Catholic West. And he, rightly, again and again stresses the elements within the Russian historical tradition which continued to influence the Marxist-Leninist leadership in the USSR.

Professor Dunn does not share the illusions of those in the West who believe that the post-Lenin communist rulers of the USSR are just philosophical agnostics who, while repeating Marxist slogans, are basically uninterested in the materialistic ideology of their official state creed. Nor does he consider the Soviet leaders to be opportunistic, day-to-day practitioners, who could easily be persuaded during a decent dialogue to become tolerantly neutral towards their subjects who believe in God.

The author describes the martyrdom which believers, and especially Roman Catholics and Uniates who were also considered to be enemies of the Russian State and culture, underwent after November 1917. Simple believers, parish priests, and some bishops, spent long years in prison, hard labour camps and in exile. How many paid with their lives nobody yet knows.

When the Second World War broke out, the Soviet government and the Vatican had to decide what would be the best outcome for them in the struggle between the Third Reich and its opponents. Until June 1941, when the Nazis invaded Russia, Stalin no doubt hoped that both antagonists would destroy each other and thus open the way for him to central

and possibly western Europe. After June 1941 the Vatican, according to Dennis Dunn (who declares his full sympathy for the Papacy's diplomacy during the war), rejected the Anglo-American policy of alliance with Soviet Russia and, faced with a choice of two evils, preferred Moscow's defeat to that of Berlin. As Professor Dunn states, the Vatican was "pro-neutral towards Germany and anti-neutral towards Soviet Russia".

The author then describes in well-documented chapters the religious policy which Moscow prescribed, and often applied through its viceroys, during the decade when the satellite States in eastern Europe were formed (Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) with their predominantly Roman Catholic populations. Moscow began with a policy of appeasement, but in 1948 a wave of persecution replaced the initial tolerance. The Vatican too, under Pius XII, was not in a mood for easy, and illusory, accommodation. And the story did not end in 1949. Paul VI was a different man from his severe predecessor. But how far has Brezhnev basically changed Soviet religious policy since the days of Stalin and Khrushchev? There are no grounds for new illusions.

LUCJAN BLIT

Dissent in Poland 1976–77: Reports and Documents in Translation, December 1975–July 1977
Association of Polish Students and Graduates in Exile, 1977,
200 pp. No price.

The kettle is coming to the boil again in Poland. Discontent has been simmering for 20 years, and in 1970 the pot boiled over in the Baltic coast cities when Gomulka put down strikes with guns. The Soviet lid that sits so firmly on Polish society looked as if it might topple off as Gomulka gave way to Gierek, and for a while the steam subsided. But it proved a temporary reprieve. The lid was put back, the hissing started again and another eruption of protest was inevitable.

This book documents that eruption and the latent discontent which provoked it. It chronicles the rumpus over the proposed constitutional changes and the strikes at the Ursus Motor Factory, Warsaw and at Radom in June 1976, with all the letters of protest that preceded and followed them. It distinguishes three main strands of protest: from the workers themselves, from the intellectuals and from the bishops. These three are inseparable elements in Polish society, and together they continue to exercise a political influence unequalled in any other totalitarian State. And the influence is far from ineffective. The threatened rise in food prices which provoked the strikes of June 1976 has yet to be implemented; the permanent relationship with the Soviet Union proposed in the Constitutional amendments in January 1976 was toned down; "the