

Heard and Seen

HYPOCRITE TELESPECTATEUR – MON SEMBLABLE – MON FRÈRE

It was with a certain sense of guilt that in the depths of this cruel winter I abandoned, briefly, both London and the cinema to take off for Monte Carlo and television. A new kind of festival altogether for me, this, though the sixth actually to be organized by UNDA, the international co-ordinating body for Catholic television; and one which in the event turned out to be both rewarding and salutary. Five to six hours of television a day, however, proved to be considerably more taxing to the eyes than an equivalent amount of the larger screen; and since the entries were divided into three categories there was, inevitably, a certain sameness within each category. The shortest programme lasted eight minutes and the longest sixty, though most of them fell between twenty-five and forty minutes; it certainly seemed, on balance, that half an hour was the ideal length from the spectator's point of view, though this may well be frustrating to the producer. Three out of the five prize-winners were programmes of precisely thirty minutes, it is relevant to note.

A few factual details may be of interest. Twelve countries, mostly from Western Europe, though the United States and French Canada were also represented, submitted entries for the competition and each competing country had one member on the jury, though this was not necessarily the head of their delegation. Entries were limited in number and selected by a preparatory commission; different production companies from the same country could compete in the same section – thus there were two German companies, and from this country both BBC and ITV put in programmes. Countries with autonomous hierarchies, like Scotland, were entitled to separate delegations and entries.

The competition, as I have said, was divided under three heads; these were different from last year, as a new section of programmes about the Council was clearly called for. Last year's 'drama' section therefore disappeared, and this led to some pretty rum entries in the first section which was called *enseignement*, such as a long dramatized monologue, adapted into American from Paul Claudel's *Death of Judas* and an excerpt from Associated-Rediffusion's *Black Nativity* (which, incidentally, had the week before won the UNDA prize within the context of the 3rd International TV Festival, also at Monte Carlo), neither of which could easily be seen as instructional within the ordinary meaning of the term. Italy showed a programme called *Maria e i Popoli* which lasted for fifty-four endless minutes and seemed to me to show all the faults one would deplore in Catholic Action television; Ireland showed a two-part magazine programme called *Island of Saints*, the first part of which was a visually beautiful and interesting parallel between the history of one ancient church and that of

Christianity in Ireland; the second half looked like a commercial for Aer Lingus, but we were assured it had been much liked by the public. The piece that received the only prize in this section – there were two to be won in each – was *Child of Light*, presented by America. This was certainly absorbing visually; composed entirely of patterns of stills – a method also used in ATV's *Image of Majesty* in the *reportage* section – it showed a small blind boy at school, lost and afraid in an unknown world, but given confidence almost against his will by the reassuring black hand reached out by a tough little coloured boy, guiding him where to go, what to do and how to play. The pictures were sometimes almost unbearable, so nakedly did the spirit show through the wary little sightless face; but the commentary which drew a very telling comparison with the predicament of man led by the equally unseen hand of God in an equally bewildering universe, was so over-written that I felt I was being got at.

The programmes on the Council varied a good deal, in spite of the huge common denominator from which they stemmed; and it was noticeable that the variations depended very much upon whether they were addressed to a purely Catholic audience, a post-Catholic audience or a context in which Catholics were in the minority. Thus the BBC put in part of that remarkable *Panorama*, with Richard Dimbleby as the earnest seeker after knowledge, which went out just before the Council began. The French produced a brilliantly cerebral piece, forty-five minutes of the most formidable intellectual exercise, called *Les Observateurs au Concile*, which was a joint production of the Protestant and Catholic services of the RTF. Looking at the Council from the point of view of the non-Catholic observers present, it confronted some of them in Paris with a simultaneously televised meeting of people like Jean Daniélou, Yves Congar and Jean Guittou in Rome, with Pastor Boegner to sum up. This was ecumenism with a vengeance (let alone technically remarkable) and no one had much doubt that it would take one of the prizes. The other went to a German programme called *Viele Kirchen – Eine Kirche* which ranged visually round the eastern rites and sound-wise at length through some eastern clergy; I preferred the Netherlands entry called *Terugkeer*, which also took us through the near east, retracing the sites of the four first Councils, but spared us the explanations. The Netherlands were unlucky, I thought, not to take home a prize: if they had been showing films at Cannes they would have collected, for my money, the prize for the best national entry.

There were so many entries in *reportage* that it spread over on to a second day, and for the fugitive from the larger screen it certainly made the most interesting section. It was also notable for the only glimmer of humour in the whole festival – a witty French programme called *Grâce à la Télévision* which showed a gentleman recumbent in bed suddenly jerked out of his Sunday-morning sloth by a peremptory order to join the *compère* on the other side of the screen, where he reluctantly proceeded to learn something about Catholic TV. France also showed a programme made by the Little Sisters of Père de Foucauld, called *Une Certaine Présence en Amazonie* which was roughly finished, short and

unpretentious, but which projected such an image of courage and charity that one was haunted by it. The jury must have had a difficult time deciding on their awards. The BBC's *Simone Weil*, which had shocked and surprised some of the delegates by the unconventionality of both subject and treatment, came away with one prize. The other went to a moving and disciplined German programme about work among the very poor in Calcutta, called *Weisser Sari – Schwarzes Kreuz* which was beautiful to look at as well as edifying. A second German piece won the press prize; this was *Franz Stock*, a biography of a German priest who had looked after the condemned men in Paris prisons during the Occupation. It was not only interesting in itself, but made a fascinating 'compare and contrast' item with the Dutch programme from the other side of the hill, *Navolger van Christus*, about a Dutch priest in Dachau.

After the completion of each section, there was a period of open discussion on the programmes shown, each item being introduced by a short summary of the aims and methods of the producer. It was exceedingly enlightening to hear the views of the different delegations, particularly on features that had perhaps seemed susceptible of only one interpretation. I had the tricky job, here, of interpreting from English into French and *vice versa*, when this was asked for; faced with technical terms unfamiliar even in English there were some terrible moments, and I grew to tremble at the inexorable *Traduction, s'il vous plaît*. It was clear, however, that these sessions, operated for the first time this year, were of the greatest value, and some uncommonly good suggestions were put forward; whether or not it was a good idea to hold them *before* the jury met for consultation, I am not so sure. One would have thought it bound to be a distraction. It was certainly a revelation to learn how much Catholic television, and of what generally high standard, is going out in the various countries: and as ever it was endlessly spell-binding to listen to the intelligent technical talk – shop is surely the best conversation in the world.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

FATHER COUTURIER AND PICASSO

Introductory Note. *When Father Couturier, a French Dominican, died in 1954, tributes were paid to him by many great artists who felt a deep sense of personal loss. Few men have been in such close touch with all that was most vitally significant, particularly in the world of painting. He was himself a trained painter and could possibly have been a great one, had he been able to reconcile it with what he considered to be his primary vocation as a friar preacher. For all his ascetic looks and the uncompromising way he led his religious life, he was completely open and sympathetic to all new movements. He had a genius for friendship; he consoled, encouraged, advised many great artists, regardless of creed or any other barriers. However he never allowed his ready sympathy in dealing with personal problems to prejudice the objectivity and*