

parallel publications – the actual writings of those about whom so much is now known, and on whom too many superficial and premature judgments have been passed.

KATHLEEN MATCHETT

The Invocation

directed by Tenghiz Abuladze, Gruzia Film, Georgia, 1968.

Molba (*The Invocation* or *The Prayer*), is a black and white film from Georgia, made by Tenghiz Abuladze, a Georgian born in 1924. It was shown at the nineteenth London Film Festival on 3 and 4 December at the National Film Theatre. Abuladze has also produced the following films: *Magdana's Donkey* (1956) co-directed with Revaz Chkheidze, *Someone Else's Children* (1958) co-directed with Djaparidze, and *Grandmother, Iliko, Illarion and Me* (1963). *The Invocation* was first seen outside the USSR at the San Remo Film Festival in 1974 where it was awarded the Grand Prize.

The screenplay is based on the classical poems, *Aluda Ketelauri* and *Guest and Host* by the Georgian poet, Vazha Pshavella (1861-1915) known for his heroic verse. His poetry calls man to fight against evil. Abuladze uses two symbols to express this struggle: the Maiden – a girl in a white dress who personifies love, and the man Matzil, who represents all that is evil. These two incompatible powers, one divine and the other earthly, are allegorically married. Love is thus destroyed – the girl in white is ritually hanged. Mindy is the central figure who recognizes the two qualities in life and acts as the vehicle for Pshavella's philosophy. He stands for human values in an evil world. The continuous but solitary call for friendship and love throughout the film is punished by murder – the right of the majority based on the cruel ancient law. The individual's question – "what is life's meaning?" – remains a scream in the dark as death and violence win the battle. Yet the film closes, as it began, with the image of the Maiden in white crossing a field, and Mindy lamenting before God for the spreading hatred and turmoil, but these words of lamentation are an affirmation of faith in God, of faith in the Light.

The Invocation deserves to be compared with two other excellent Soviet films which have been shown in Britain: Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* completed early in 1967 and Georgi Shengelaya's *Pirosmani* made in 1971. *Andrei Rublev* is not an historical film nor an art documentary but a dramatic interpretation of medieval Russia through a portrayal of the life and work of Russia's greatest icon painter, Andrei Rublev. We are offered his vision of Russia: a crucifixion, the image of the risen Christ, scenes of desolation, and his vision of communion, the icon of The Holy

Trinity. *Pirosmani* likewise is not a conventional biography but an exploratory feature about the primitive Georgian painter Niko Pirozmanishvili (1863-1918) and his world of paintings. The film opens with Pirozmanishvili reading the biblical account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. It closes with Pirozmanishvili spending three days in a tomb at Easter where he creates his last monumental work. Unmistakably his life follows the pattern of Christ's Life – suffering and redemption.

Despite the stylistic differences, all three films are imaginative studies of the artist and his vision, and they use religious imagery. This religious element reveals the interest of Soviet contemporary artists in religious questions. The search for values in religion and the solitary suffering of the individual (subjects avoided by Socialist Realism) have become prominent in Soviet art today.

MILENA KALINOVSKA

IMAGE OF MODERN RUSSIA Keston College Exhibition

Keston College (Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism) plans to present an exhibition based on religious *samizdat* documents. Also on display will be a number of religious paintings brought to the West from unofficial art exhibitions in Moscow and various photographs. Works for the exhibition will be selected to show the extent of the religious revival in the USSR.

Date: 3-29 May 1976 (Monday-Saturday 11-5)

Place: Parkway Focus Gallery,
76 Parkway, London N.W.1
(near Regent's Park)