

COMMENTARY

TEN YEARS AFTER. The ten years that have passed since the end of open war in Europe could scarcely be called years of peace. And the anniversary sees the defeated enemy rearmed with the support of the West in the hope of preserving what remains of free Europe from Communist domination. Such is the ironical sequel of all the immense sacrifices of six years of war. And yet there is much to be grateful for. However deep the divisions that separate Russia from the West, communication is not altogether stopped; negotiation, however tortuous and inconclusive, is not wholly abandoned. The alternative, realized now in its terrible gravity, is such that even the most impatient American strategists must pause before the prospect.

'Co-existence' is not indeed an aim that a Christian opinion can pursue with any enthusiasm. It is simply a realistic acceptance of the condition of a fallen world, the recognition that to live alongside a potential enemy is at least to preserve the possibility of peace. That, with varying degrees of tension, has been the experience of Europe for centuries. For America, compelled to abandon the comfort of isolationism in a world in which even oceans are no longer a frontier, the experience is new and extremely frustrating. And patience is not always easy for those who have power.

Since the War Europe has seen losses and gains on a scale unimaginable before. The virtual extinction from international life of the Eastern countries is a continuing tragedy, and the Church has known a degree of determined persecution that has aimed at her very existence. It is easy to forget the silent millions of Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, and the news of fresh attacks can begin to be accepted as inevitable: conscience itself can grow blunted through long continuing assault and the sense of utter impotence to intervene or even to lessen the pain. But the hope must be that the Europe which remains free—free at least to make its own mistakes and perhaps to learn from them—will through its present example hasten the day of liberation for which we pray.

For the Church, in the economy of her own life, there have been trials too. Such a crisis as that of the priest-workers in France

was more than a matter of domestic politics: it reflected in the most poignant way the difficulties there must be in applying the Church's perennial teaching to a complex and divided society, so secularized as to be scarcely capable of recognizing her existence, much less her right to speak and act in the name of Christ. But the revival of an authentic Christian life is plain to see, and it is in the extension of that life—in the conviction that we must not only seek peace but must pursue it—that hope will lie. Nothing less than that can match the challenge of a totalitarian hatred of religion. For essentially the peace we pursue is already achieved: it is that tranquillity of order that can exist in the heart and mind of every man, however enslaved his body may be.

Ten years are a short enough time in human history, and in the providence of God they can mean but a moment. But a moment can be redemptive, and it was a divine intervention in time that achieved man's salvation. That is why no human event can be unimportant: it carries within its limits the whole weight of man's new destiny as made capable of eternal life. That, too, is why the commemoration of a war that is over must mean more than the relief that a calamity is past, that fresh calamities have so far been averted. The prayer for peace is in the end the reference of all conflict—within ourselves as well as within the whole family of nations—to Christ who is our peace.

'CATHOLIC REVIEWS AND CHRISTIAN OPINION' is the subject of the second BLACKFRIARS Conference, to be held at Spode House, Hawkesyard, Rugeley, from July 1 to 4. The speakers will include Fathers Victor White and Ian Hislop, Count Michael de la Bedoyère (Editor of *The Catholic Herald*), Douglas Hyde, Paul Jennings and Renée Haynes. As numbers are being strictly limited, contributors and friends of this review who wish to attend are asked to write to the Warden at Spode House as soon as possible.