

## COMMENTARY

WAR AND PEACE. Last year's *Semaine Sociale*, held at Pau, took for its subject the conflicts that divide the contemporary world. The published proceedings reveal the authoritative level of the discussion at what has become by this the most influential of all such Catholic gatherings. In view of an article in this issue of BLACKFRIARS on the morality of modern war, the attention of our readers may be directed in particular to contributions by Father Delos, O.P. (on 'The Sociology of Modern War') and by Father Ducattillon, O.P. (on 'The Morality of the Means used in Modern War').

For Father Delos, war is an anachronism: and the imperative need now is not so much to insist on the conditions which moralists have devised for a 'just' war as on the positive obligations of peace. The organizations of an international society, however imperfect, have imposed new perspectives, and 'to return to the priority of the positive problem of constructing peace is to return to the Christian tradition: in which men and peoples are the makers of an order whose end is peace, and they are the engineers of its realization'. Furthermore, war has lost its sociological function: it is no longer even a practicable instrument of policy. And it is important that the moral aspects of war should not be isolated from its totality: war is not merely immoral, it is superfluous. We have already entered an epoch that is very different from that which could regard war as a possible means of achieving international order and hence as possibly just. In a new situation new criteria must be found, and man's genius must be devoted to 'peace in progress' even more ardently than it is to the successful prosecution of a war.

Father Ducattillon has little difficulty in showing how completely the nature of total war conflicts with the traditional conditions for a 'just' conflict of arms between nations. 'It is certain that war, on account of the means that it must inevitably use and which have become essential to it, is no longer fit to achieve, in the service of justice and peace, the function which might in the past have rendered it justifiable.' But there remains the dilemma of defence against unjustifiable aggression, and here one has to recall the present Pope's warning (Christmas message,

1948) that 'there are goods which are of such importance for the human community that their defence against unjust aggression is undoubtedly fully justified'. Such a defence is not war properly so-called, but the tragedy is that it can scarcely be undertaken without recourse to means which go beyond the mere repelling of aggression. It remains true that, however grievous our present injustices may seem, few conceivable causes could justify the unleashing of the inherent evils of a modern war. The words of the Pope, uttered in the midst of the last war, are a terrible reminder of what a conflict between nations really means. 'If ever a generation has known in the depths of its being the cry, "War to war", it is certainly our own. It has passed through a sea of tears such as perhaps no other time has known: it has lived through such unspeakable atrocities that the recollection of so many horrors will remain imprinted in its memory and in the very depths of its soul as the image of a hell whose gates anyone with any feeling of humanity would wish to close forever.'

It is not enough, then, to condemn the means of modern war. The Christian attitude must be the positive one of working for the establishment of peace through the instruments of international organization, which, however inadequate they may be, at least exist, and which demand the support, and not the cynical suspicion, of all who believe that war is both evil and unnecessary.

**THE HERESY OF RACIALISM.** Among the causes of division in the world the spurious theory of racialism is one of the most iniquitous. For the special iniquity of discrimination against a people or a group on grounds of colour or genetic origin is that it denies the essential brotherhood of men in Christ. UNESCO has recently turned its attention to the problems of race as a cause of conflict, and Father Yves Congar, O.P., in the first of a series of pamphlets published by UNESCO, has reaffirmed the unchanging Christian tradition of the equal dignity of all mankind. 'It is because there is but one God, in whose image all have been fashioned, one Father whose children we all likewise are, that all men are brothers, in a way that no created power can destroy.'

Racial discrimination is an evil which, unlike other causes of conflict, the individual can do much to eliminate. Few are the countries, such as South Africa, in which discrimination has the sanction of the law. Elsewhere, prejudice and the senseless habit

of mind which considers the accident of colour to confer 'inferiority' are often at work at the local level which the ordinary citizen can affect. This is particularly true of America, where the constitutional safeguards of negro rights are so often belied by local injustice. And American appeals that European nations should settle their differences sometimes seem to come with little grace from a country in which a minority still suffers so much from racial discrimination. In South Africa the problem is graver, and Father Congar does well to quote from the 1952 Pastoral Letter of the South African bishops, with its unequivocal condemnation of the deprivation of human rights on the grounds of racial origin. The record of the Church in this matter should be better known, and it is good to see, for instance, that historians are increasingly acknowledging the influence of Catholic moralists such as Vitoria and Las Casas on the treatment of the native populations of South America by the Spanish conquerors. Whatever may have been the excesses of individuals, the principles of the Church were—and are—consistent in condemning any theory or legislation which seeks to discriminate against any people whatsoever because of their origin or colour.

For the Church's missionary work the question is of paramount importance, and it may be that future generations will look back on the courageous and consistent defence of the equality of men in the sight of God as the principal Catholic achievement of this century. In this, as in so much else besides, the Church is increasingly left with the defence of essential human liberties, and many even beyond her allegiance are glad to acknowledge that this is no matter of partisan advantage but rather the simple proof of her function in the world. She can speak without hesitation of the brotherhood of man because she is the mediator on earth of the fatherhood of God.

[NOTE: *Guerre et Paix; De La Coexistence des Blocs à une Communauté Internationale*. 40e Semaine Sociale de France, 1953. (La Chronique Sociale de France, 16 Rue du Plat, Lyon 2; 995 Francs.)

*The Catholic Church and the Race Question*. By Father Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P. (UNESCO; obtainable from H. M. Stationery Office, 2s.)]