

Soviet attitudes, and we despair over Russian "inflexibility." But we have our own modes of inflexibility, and the great danger we now face—the life and death danger for our civilization—is that we will continue to be so preoccupied with the challenges of a decade ago that we will fail to meet new challenges facing us now.

No nuclear bombs may ever be dropped—no armies, even, may ever meet—and the West may go down to total defeat. Some weeks ago Premier Khrushchev "declared war" on the Western powers." But the "war" he declared was a political-economic war, and he declared it from a situation of strength.

The Soviet power is continuing to make political and economic gains in the Middle East. It is continuing to identify itself—however falsely—

with the hopes of millions of men for a better life. But in the United States, at this very writing, such minimal programs for survival as the Reciprocal Trade Act and the President's foreign aid program may be killed, or at least emasculated, by an "economy-minded" Congress. The American people—and their elected representatives—have yet to learn, it seems, that it is not only the Bomb that can destroy them.

There are other, more subtle but no less dangerous, threats. The choice for our civilization is not the relatively simple one of war or surrender. It remains a choice "between the quick and the dead," but it is a choice more likely to be resolved by imaginative diplomacy than by arms. In this contest, in May, 1958, *our* side has yet to begin to fight.

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in the magazines

There is a moment in Sheridan's eighteenth century play, *The Critic*, where the characters suddenly freeze, finding themselves about to be impaled upon each other's swordpoints. Such a farcical image of the balance of terror may not be compatible with the gravities of the world situation today, but Raymond Aron's article in the Spring issue of *Partisan Review*, "Coexistence: The End of Ideology," calls it repeatedly to mind. "Coexistence," declares Mr. Aron, "is neither a doctrine nor a desire: it is first and foremost a *fact*." Reviewing the present international scene, he sees reason to suggest that the era of "ideologies," of the clear conflict of principles, may be coming to an end. Our own "ideological aggressiveness," he believes, is limited for the most part to a reactive posture—limited "to the extent that [the Soviet Union] seeks the destruction of our free societies." And the conditions of what we have come to call the Cold War ("a form of coexistence") grow ever more equivocal in nature:

" . . . A definitive or even a relatively definitive settlement of the Russian-American rivalry . . . is excluded for four basic reasons: a clash of ideologies prevents the two Great Powers from simply accepting each other or legitimizing the status quo; the division of Europe constitutes a permanent cause of insecurity; the anti-Western revolt in Asia, Africa and the Middle East works to the advantage of the Soviets (even when they play no role in it) and threatens to isolate the white minority of Europe and America; and finally, the technological weapons race seems to rule out any stabilization or limitation of armaments."

Considering each of these factors in turn, Mr. Aron finds that East and West are working at cross-pur-

poses: "The simple truth is that the West wants a military status quo and Moscow wants a political one." In their choice of "cold" over "total" war, the United States and the Soviet Union seem unable to agree on the terms of a tolerant coexistence. One thing seems certain in the impasse that prevails: the balance of terror as a probably permanent fact of the international situation. As long as Communism possesses the H-Bomb, ideological crusades are irrelevant. "The West cannot dispense with the threat of collective suicide, and the intellectuals can neither reject nor acclaim such a strategy."

• Coexistence perceived as an end to ideology is also the guiding thought behind the lead editorial in *Christianity and Crisis* for April 28. Described as a "trial balloon to initiate discussion rather than to proclaim a position," the editorial makes a plea for a new attitude to the Communist regimes of Russia and China. While we should continue to "help other nations find constructive alternatives to Communism," we should "avoid the perpetual official moral diatribe against Communist countries" and accept the fact that Communism "is irreversible but it is not unchangeable." Signs of change in certain of the satellite nations and in Russia itself are evidence that the ideological construct is failing and that hostilities based upon its claims are of small significance. "We, as well as the Communists, have been thinking too ideologically rather than humanly about the problems of the 'Cold War,' in terms of a *priori* stereotypes rather than in terms of changing, concrete human realities."

PAMPHILUS