

"which American citizens as individuals must decide for themselves." But to pursue the meaning that supposedly inheres in this sentence is to get entangled in another series of unanswered questions. For how else do American citizens decide questions except as individuals, and for themselves? That they depend for information, guidance and support upon the various communities of which they are a part is both true and inevitable. But so must anyone who attempts to think through the troubled situation in Vietnam.

Any publication that enters our national debate about Vietnam on the level of this journal not only confuses important issues that need constant clarification, and damages the very cause it purports to uphold, but exposes itself as an easy target to those who would dismiss critics of Administration policy. For it badly confuses the relation between politics and morality, and the way in which citizens exercise their political will. A moral problem in the political arena is also a political problem and must be solved by political means. Those who, adopting a high moral stance, suggest otherwise are simply being self-indulgent.

... POLITICS AND MERE MORALITY

Those who would sever the relation between politics and morality, asserting the priority of morality, have their counterparts in those who would make the same disjunction but would assert the priority and even superiority of politics. For example, earlier this month the *Chicago Tribune* carried an editorial entitled "No 'Moral Nonsense' for de Gaulle." The editorial praised the way in which France, in contrast to the United States and the United Kingdom, was conducting its policies with South Africa. For France now expects to sell to South Africa the several hundred million dollars worth of arms that Britain refused to sell for stated moral reasons. "The truth of the matter is that moral considerations have very little more to do with the positions of Britain and the United Nations and the United States than they do with the position of France or, for that matter, South Africa." And the *Tribune* went on to develop this proposition:

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"Britain and the United States are in a jam because we have tried to clothe our actions in moralistic arguments which, in fact, had relatively little to do with matters. By doing this, we have shackled ourselves to a policy which is as senseless as it is futile. The Afro-Asian leaders know this and are making the most of it. President de Gaulle has left morals out of it, has assumed no commitments, and is thus free to do what he wants without offending anyone."

President de Gaulle's approach to this particular problem may have virtues absent from the approach of Britain and the United States, but if so it is not because those policies are divorced from morality. Both *The Critic* and the *Chicago Tribune* have attempted to support partisan opinions not by confronting the admittedly tough problems of making decisions that are practically desirable and morally acceptable, but by dissolving them. There is little to recommend the approach of either — basically so similar — except to say that they have a number of supporters. But their positions are not those that provide the guidance that we need so desperately in our present crisis. J.F.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

is devoted to politics and the church. *Thomas S. Derr* distinguishes between ethical rhetoric and ethical reality as he examines responses to both the war in Vietnam and the recent war in the Middle East. *Paul Bock* considers the ways in which the churches have spoken on the issues of disarmament and arms control. And *Eduard Duff, S.J.* offers a considered comment on a much debated book, *Who Speaks for the Church?* by Paul Ramsey.