

# worldview

A JOURNAL OF ETHICS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## BETWEEN MORALITY AND POWER

This publication is only six months old, but already some of its readers suggest it has taken a stand with the "realists" on questions of ethics and world affairs. And the final meaning of "realism," they say, is power pure and simple, the sacrifice of principle to expediency, whatever lip-service may be paid to virtue along the way to its defeat. This is the argument made in a number of letters we have received, one of which, the communication from Professor William A. Banner of Howard University, is published elsewhere in this issue of *Worldview*.

The argument is a serious one, and *Worldview* takes it seriously. This journal has no interest in allying itself with any particular school of morality, as morality relates to international affairs. Indeed, it thinks that one of its chief functions is to make a continuing examination of all "schools." It hopes to provide a medium for dialogue between men of opposing views—realists and idealists, liberals and conservatives, Protestants, Catholics, Jews. Through dialogue, it hopes at least to indicate what the problems facing our statesmen and our moralists are.

*Worldview* has no moral programs; it has, rather, moral concerns. Because, it is convinced, the answers we seek (if, in so complex an area as ethics and foreign affairs, we may speak of "answers" at all) lie well beyond the categories of fixed programs or positions. They will be arrived at through wisdom rather than through rules.

For these reasons, among others, this magazine distrusts the single-minded application of any position to current problems. It is worried over the fact that, in an age of unparalleled moral threat, much of our national thinking is postulated solely on considerations of power. It is worried, too, over the fact that in an age of unparalleled physical threat much of our religious thinking is postulated solely on considerations of abstract virtue. Examples of both are easy to

come by. An instance of the former is cited in the editorial from *Christianity and Crisis* which we reprint on page 9; an instance of the latter is seen in some aspects of the foreign policy statement recently issued by the leaders of a major Protestant denomination.

The question of nuclear testing has become, in many quarters, an emotion-charged issue, a shibboleth used to separate the good from the wicked. On the one side, if a man is for "security" he is for continuing the tests; on the other, if a man is for "peace" he is for their immediate cessation. Period. Both sides fail to consider that the question of nuclear testing cannot be decided in a vacuum; it must be judged within the much larger and more complex context of peace with justice in our time.

But *Christianity and Crisis* is surely speaking to the point when it deplors the moral complacency over testing that seems implicit in many of our government's official pronouncements. As *Christianity and Crisis* acknowledges, there are many other considerations besides the moral which our government and our churches must take into account. But, when all the considerations are weighed, the moral consideration remains a major one. To ignore it, or to treat it as a luxury this nation cannot afford in time of peril, is to distort reality itself. Yet this is what much of our "official" and our popular thinking seems to do.

History indicates that it takes the popular imagination a generation, at least, or else the shock of direct experience, to adjust to a new reality. This nation went into World War I as though it were going to a picnic. It did not really know what modern warfare means. But it entered World War II grimly: its imagination had been chastened by the horrors of 1918.

There is, alas, little reason to think that this nation now realizes what World War III—a war fought with massive thermonuclear weapons—would mean. We are duly grim about warfare, of course, but ours is the grimness proper to a

pre-thermonuclear world. We still tend (on the popular level, at least) to think and to speak of a new world war as a last-resort option. "How dead can you be? after all."

Unfortunately, "you," we, they—all together—can now be deader than was ever possible before in human history. For the first time in human history everyone, everything, can be dead. And this fact gives the moral problem of armaments an urgency, a relevancy, it never had before. To treat power as power pure and simple, divorced from morality, is the ultimate unreality. We live in a world where power and morality are irrevocably joined.

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But if our "official" and popular thinking is too much given to moral complacency, some of our religious thinking is too much given to moral abstraction. The recent pronouncement on U. S. foreign policy, issued by a great Protestant denomination, raises some troubling questions for the relationship between ethics and world affairs.

The statement deplors the fact that the United States "counts among its allies some nations which are in no sense free. By our actions we proclaim to the world that lands where human freedom is utterly dead can qualify for membership in the free world simply by supplying military bases or strategic commodities . . . This kind of international hypocrisy should be abhorrent to Christians . . ."

And, addressing itself, apparently, to the question of a Summit meeting, the statement proclaims that there can be "no substitute for personal encounter in the pursuit of human understanding . . . When men who profess the Christian religion make no adequate provision for a face-to-face encounter with their enemies, they betray the religion which they profess."

This statement is admirable in its tone of moral integrity. And it does a public service in indicating how unsatisfactory, really, the term "free world" is. Obviously, if this term is interpreted narrowly, it does not describe our present alliances. But then, if we insist on interpreting it narrowly, we are probably not going to have any effective alliance against Soviet aggression at all. In the imperfect world we have to live in, with the ambiguous powers with which we must deal, all that "free world" can possibly mean is "free from Soviet domination." (And surely there can be no nation on earth—even the Soviet Union—where human freedom is "utterly" dead.)

And one must wonder, too, whether it is wise to make a "face-to-face encounter" between the leaders of this nation and their enemies a clear-cut dogma of Christian faith. One supposes that no Christian, or any other religious man, can be opposed to personal encounter. But one supposes, too, that a good many religious men can think of instances when personal encounter—for any number of reasons—will do more harm than good. Whether any particular encounter is one of those instances is a question to which a responsible morality must address itself.

The point is, of course, that neither power nor morality can speak relevantly to our condition unless they speak within our condition's total context. Abstracted from that context, either may be irresponsible, or dangerous, or, finally, fatal.

*Worldview* is not concerned either with ethics or with foreign affairs in themselves. It is concerned with seeking some meeting between the two, a meeting that can be brought about within the walls of no single "school." Imperfection is the pathos of politics. Perfectionism is the pathos of morality. Somewhere between the two we may find wisdom which, in our time, means finding a way for the human race to survive, with justice and with peace.

## De GAULLE

As this editorial is written, General Charles de Gaulle has come to power in France. No one who cares for France and for the West can wish him anything but success. But no one who cares about the liberal institutions of France and of the West can, we think, feel anything but distress over the way the General attained his goal. If he did not actively encourage the military junta in Algeria, he at least acquiesced in its threat to overthrow the Republic and all those values for which it stands. Only greatness can erase this initial compromise.

Some one has written that the soul of France is in Algeria "waiting to be saved." Unless it is saved, all of us may be lost, because the Algerian war involves much more than France; it involves basic values without which none of us can survive. For better or for worse (we pray for the better) we must now look to de Gaulle. May he find for France and for the West that greatness of vision and of spirit which he promises, the greatness without which no solution in Algeria will be possible at all. In the meantime, we wait with a very cautious hope.

## INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER

As we observe in our lead editorial, this magazine is committed to dialogue between men of different and even opposing views. One of America's most distinguished Catholic theologians—Father Gustave Weigel—last month welcomed the Protestant-Catholic dialogue as a new and major development in American life.

Thirty years ago, Father Weigel thinks, such a dialogue could not have taken place. But we have learned much since then, both about each other and about the necessity for communication between the several religious faiths.

"A climate of suspicion and resentment is not

the proper environment for virtue," Father Weigel states, "and it certainly weakens national unity. It is equally good for both Protestant and Catholic that they understand each other thoroughly and that they learn to trust each other in their differences."

To trust each other in our differences. This is the condition without which no communication can take place. The interfaith dialogue implies no compromise of essential views on any side. It does imply a deepening of views on every side and a willingness to learn from each other. We agree with Father Weigel that the developing exchange of ideas between men of different faiths is one of the most hopeful signs in the United States today.

## *in the magazines*

Bertrand Russell's declarations on the subject of the nuclear stalemate have involved him in what looks like a running debate with Sidney Hook. In the April 7 issue of the *New Leader*, Hook took Russell to task for telling Joseph Alsop that, if the Communists could not be persuaded to accept controlled nuclear disarmament, the West should disarm unilaterally even if this meant Communist world domination. This utterance was received by Hook "with a feeling of great personal sadness." And he commented, "Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown! . . . When they listen to sentiments like this, why *should* the Soviets consent to controlled nuclear disarmament? All they need to do is wait and the world will be given to them on a platter . . ."

The *New Leader* for May 26 carries a rejoinder by Russell which chooses not to debate the inevitable outcome of his position, as Hook has analyzed it. Rather, Russell devotes himself to an elaboration of his highly publicized remark that he would prefer Communist domination to nuclear extinction. "Human history," Russell writes, "abounds in great disasters. One civilization after another has been swept away by hordes of barbarians . . . The men who think as Dr. Hook does are being un-historical and are displaying a myopic vision to which future centuries are invisible. A victory of Communism might be as disastrous as the barbarian destruction of the Roman empire, but there is no reason to think that it would be more disastrous than that event. While the human race survives, humaneness, love of liberty, and a civilized way of life will, sooner or later, prove irresistibly attractive."

For Hook, however, "a Communist world could easily become a scientific Gehenna—something in-

comparably worse than the destruction of the Roman empire by the barbarians . . . Communists have always argued that it is justified to bury several generations, if necessary, in order to fertilize the soil of history for a glorious future to be enjoyed by the still unborn. In some respects, Russell's argument is similar except that, as an opponent of Communism, he puts the glory much further into the future. Cosmic optimism, however, seems no more credible to me than historical optimism."

In "Thirty Years of Salazar," which appears in the May 30 issue of *The Commonweal*, Francis E. McMahon gives a comprehensive account of the Salazar regime in Portugal—its theoretical base (Charles Maurras' *L'Action Française* movement in the Twenties) its economic achievements, its record of Church-State relations, its colonial problems, its foreign policy. The greatest danger to the regime, McMahon concludes, is the one that troubles most modern dictators—"their final legacy is generally a political vacuum." Thirty years of Salazar have not as yet assured Portugal's future.

Of great informational value, too, is the May issue of *Social Order*; its lead article, "Duties to Underdeveloped Countries" by Leon H. Janssen, S. J., is followed by a symposium on the subject to which a dozen experts lend their knowledge and judgment.

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