

Correspondence

“Looking Back on Fidel”

To the Editors: Despite the obvious hostility of the author, Maurice Halperin, toward the subject about which he was writing, I very much enjoyed the article “Looking Back on Fidel” in the October issue of *Worldview*. The article captures somewhat the spontaneity that is both the strength and weakness of Cuba under Fidel. I find it perplexing that the author can condemn the capricious nature of Fidel’s spontaneity and in the same breath deplore the “bureaucratic rationality” of the Soviet influence. In my trip to Havana this past September I found Cuba’s combination of spontaneity and bureaucratic rationality enabled her to feed, clothe, house, and educate her people while still being one of the most exciting countries I had ever visited.

Professor Halperin’s obituary of Dr. André Voisin’s agricultural project in Cuba, like so many other prophets of doom for the Cuban Revolution, also proves to be a bit premature. On September 7, 1976, I visited the Valle de Picadura experimental farm about forty miles outside of Havana, where Professor Voisin’s theories have been implemented. The Cubans seemed to be very pleased with the results of the Voisin method of agriculture, and today Valle de Picadura is only one of seventeen farms, each containing sixty to ninety head of cattle, which have implemented his method.

Doug Hostetter

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Maurice Halperin Responds:

It is unfortunate that critical evaluation is construed as “hostility.” Castro himself has repented and promised to turn over a new leaf. At the first Congress of the Communist Party in Cuba he is quoted as having said on December 18, 1975, that “in running our economy we have unquestionably fallen into errors of idealism and on occasion we have ignored the existence of objective economic laws....” He further stated that

the “germ of chauvinism and petty bourgeois spirit frequently suffered by those of us who arrive at the roads of revolution through purely intellectual means at times unconsciously fosters attitudes that might be labelled arrogance and an overdose of self-esteem” (*The First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party*, Information Roundup, Prensa Latina, Havana, no date, p. 22). These Marxist formulations translate into the Voisin episode I described.

As for Soviet-style bureaucratic rationality, there was no intention to “deplore” it or otherwise qualify it. It was simply stated as a fact. Under the circumstances I believe Castro had no choice but to accept it.

Concerning the farm in the Valle de Picadura, it has long been a showpiece on the guided tour provided for foreign visitors—many of whom, incidentally, would have difficulty in distinguishing a cow from a bull. As Shakespeare put it: “All that glisters is not gold” (*Merchant of Venice*, Act II, Scene 7).

Church and State: The Strict Separationists

To the Editors: Richard John Neuhaus referred in his September piece on Jimmy Carter (“A Carter Presidency and the Real Watershed,” Excursus) to “present clichés” about Church-State separation and said he would welcome a “reexamination of the divorce between public and private belief.” I think Neuhaus is mixing apples and potatoes.

There is a rather general consensus among Church-State separationists that separation has to do not with the relations between public and private belief but with such concrete government-religion problems as tax aid for parochial schools and sectarian colleges, government-sponsored or mandated devotions or religious instruction in public schools, proposed constitutional amendments to impose upon all women a specific sectarian theology of fetal personhood, government toleration of religious kidnapping (deprogramming), government regulatory agency toleration of public utility violations of First Amendment freedoms, government restrictions on worship in private homes, etc.

Indeed, a strict separation between
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WORLDVIEW

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Worldview* is to place public policies, particularly in international affairs, under close ethical scrutiny. The Council on Religion and International Affairs, which sponsors the journal, was founded in 1914 by religious and civic leaders brought together by Andrew Carnegie. It was mandated to work toward ending the barbarity of war, to encourage international cooperation, and to promote justice. The Council is independent and nonsectarian. *Worldview* is an important part of the Council’s wide-ranging program in pursuit of these goals.

Worldview is open to diverse viewpoints and encourages dialogue and debate on issues of public significance. It is edited in the belief that large political questions cannot be considered adequately apart from ethical and religious reflection. The opinions expressed in *Worldview* do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Council. Through *Worldview* the Council aims to advance the national and international exchange without which our understanding will be dangerously limited.

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Correspondence (from p. 2)

Church and State is essential to the freedom, independence, health, and vitality of religion and religious bodies. A church grown dependent upon government for support is in a poorer position to criticize the misdeeds of government than a church supported wholly by voluntary donations and free of obligations to Caesar.

By all means let Christian, Jewish, Humanist and other ethical insights help mold public morality, but let us remember Heine's observation that an established or government-preferred church is rather like a—uh—courtesan.

Edd Doerr

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Americans United for Separation
of Church and State
Silver Spring, Md.*

Richard John Neuhaus Responds:

And now we have, in addition to apples and potatoes, a few oranges and bitter grapes. The usual "strict separationist" confusion about the relation between private and public belief is, I am afraid, manifest in Mr. Doerr's objection. If the abortion issue, for example, hinges upon a "specific sectarian theology," from what theological/moral/religious traditions do we derive opposition to capital punishment or concern for a starving but eminently expendable (by any nonsectarian calculus) peasant girl in Bangladesh? To put it another way, the operative values of Western civilization are inseparable—both historically and at present—from the Judeo-Christian tradition and the "sectarian" institutions that bear that tradition. I too favor a vigorously critical and relentlessly untameable religious community able "to speak truth to power." That end is not advanced, however, by stripping the public sphere of particularist religion, thus giving the government a monopoly on the promulgation of presumably "nonsectarian" values. Indeed such a course is the formula for totalitarianism, which would mean an end to the independence and dissent so sincerely but so wrong-headedly espoused by "strict separationists."



Kim Chi Ha is

ON TRIAL FOR HIS LIFE

in South Korea. His "crime":
Writing articles criticizing the
South Korean government's
harsh treatment of political
dissidents.

Kim Chi Ha and half a million
other "prisoners of conscience"
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