To the Editors: This week, along with the on Manhattan's civilized streets, where, as son Carey McWilliams ruminations on Worldview arrived bringing Wil­ Commander Zero's Costa Rica news con­ tempted assassination of the pope and con­ revelation of Soviet complicity in the at­ tain obligations on us, not because the Nic­araguans are nice people, but because we hope to be. We have no duty to invite louts to dinner, but we cannot complain about their table manners if we do.

Correspondence

MISUSING MISS MANNERS

To the Editors: This week, along with the revelation of Soviet complicity in the at­ tempted assassination of the pope and con­ firmation of the terrorist bombing of Commander Zero's Costa Rica news con­ ference, Worldview arrived bringing Wil­ son Carey McWilliams ruminations on international etiquette ("Mr. Reagan and Miss Manners," Under Cover, May). His citation of Little Miss Manners' dic­ tum as a precept for international relations is ludicrous. It doesn't even govern conduct on Manhattan's civilized streets, where, as the weather warms, one's stroll is rudely spoilt by blaring boxes.

Throughout the world, unfortunately, most nations are ruled by nasty thugs who have no regard for their citizens' rights, much less any interest in polite conduct. The Sukharovs serve as a constant reminder of the sad plight suffered by most of these victims. Only in democracies are citizens protected by their governments from bru­ tality. Elsewhere, the governments are of­ ten very rude. Even the Sandinistas are guilty of impolite conduct, including, but not limited to, their deliberate affront to the pope. They've been very rude to the Miskito In­ dians.

If Mr. McWilliams' prissy comments had not led you to print a wrong-headed conclusion in Worldview, they could have passed unnoticed as ramblings brought on by an overdose of Louis Farrakhan's epi­ thets. To correct this error, I submit that lawless nations that combine great power with great skill command, like the Mafia chieftain, fear, but not respect.

F. Randall Smith
New York, N.Y.

Wilson Carey McWilliams Responds: Mr. Smith seems to be under the delusion that civilized regimes and well-mannered people are inherently nonviolent and des­ tined to be victimized. Civilized states know how to use force: It would be a rash mug­ ger, after all, who tackled Mrs. Thatcher. In fact, civilized regimes understand that there is no halfway house between civility and thuggery. If the Nicaraguan regime is noth­ ing but a bunch of assassins, it is not entitled to the protection of good form or law. But the United States has chosen to recognize Nicaraguans, and that decision imposes cer­ tain obligations on us, not because the Nic­ araguans are nice people, but because we hope to be. We have no duty to invite louts to dinner, but we cannot complain about their table manners if we do.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

To the Editors: I work for Lutheran World Relief, an overseas relief and development agency of the Lutheran Churches in the United States. Just before I read Stephen Fenichell's "U.N. Watch" column about the "Homeless in Africa" in the June issue of Worldview, I had read a lengthy report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on Women in Agricultu­ re. I quote a few sentences of that report: "In the developing world, where more than a third of the total population is rural and female, women produce most of the food for domestic consumption.... Women in urban areas grow at least 50 percent of the world's food. They work in all aspects of cultivation, including planting, thinning, weeding, applying fertilizer and harvesting. In some parts of Africa, women provide up to 90 percent of the rural food supply...."

Surely Mr. Fenichell cannot mean what it sounds like he means when he closes his column with the question, "And among women, children and elderly men, who is to be trained and rehabilitated?"

Many development agencies, including Lutheran World Relief, have come to un­ derstand that successful development must involve women as a key resource. How much more crucial is it now, when these women are providing what stability and family continuity is left for displaced people, that they be trained and involved totally, even primarily, in all aspects of programs shaping their future. We in the so-called developed world are desperately in need of developing our understanding of, and sensitivity to, other cultures if we are truly to be partners in positive change.

Edna W. Wagschal
New York, N.Y.

Stephen Fenichell Responds: Yes, women are the backbone of agriculture in underdeveloped countries, and women in refugee camps can be trained to farm. The question "who will be rehabilitated among women, children, and elderly men?" was not meant to disparage women but to indicate that such training is rarely even a remote possibility for millions of refugees.

Camps are usually placed in desolate areas. Whatever money is available from the High Commissioner's office or volun­ teer groups goes for food, medicine, tents. Repatriation is unlikely because people who flee from war, repression, and famine in the Third World are not welcome anywhere, unless they are young men of conscription age.

It would be good to see women refugees producing food while their children play and study in day care centers. On a very small scale, private organizations can ac­ complish such miracles. But such good works barely scratch the surface of the mas­ sive job facing the High Commissioner for Refugees.