Correspondence

MR. REAGAN'S INAUGURAL

To the Editors: I wish to register my objection to Wilson Carey McWilliams's page of humbug in the March issue of *Worldview* (Under Cover: "Private Lives and Public Visions").

Mr. McWilliams not only misreads stock market fluctuations but also election returns. He constructs an "heroic" strawman by carping at a rhetorical flourish in the president's inaugural address. The speech, as expected by most financial and political analysts, reaffirmed the president's long-standing commitment to less government expenditure and regulation, lower taxes, more economic growth, and an unapologetic steadfast foreign policy. To expect a speech from Mr. Reagan endorsing different policies is to cynically hope that he would disavow the basis for his electoral victory. Expectations of that kind are neither Churchillian nor democratic.

No honest observer of our election had any reason to expect President Reagan to renounce his oft-stated regard for individualism and instead advocate "government policies to strengthen our relationships." As Mr. McWilliams knows, the U.S. Government is prohibited from instituting policies to advance religion, and I expect that even he might object to bureaucrats meddling with his friendships.

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AN AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

To the Editors: In his review of *The National Interest and the Human Interest: An Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Books, December, 1980). George S. Weigel, Jr., compliments the book for asking the right questions about U.S. foreign policy but criticizes the answers on grounds that they are "ideological." I would like to respond to this point, not so much to defend the book (readers will assess it for themselves) as to discuss what I believe is a common misunderstanding in policy analysis.

What does it mean to be ideological? In one sense, every comprehensive understanding of reality or set of beliefs is inescapably ideological. This is the sense in which Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines ideology as "a way of thinking." In a second, less general, sense the term "ideological" carries negative connotations suggesting that a way of thinking is impractical or empirically inaccurate....

The merit of a way of thinking cannot be determined by whether the ideas constitute an ideology, as they unavoidably do (in the first sense), but by whether the ideas themselves accurately reflect reality. If one believes that a way of thinking, or an ideology, deserves criticism, it is more helpful, intellectually straightforward, and less subject to hidden political bias if one simply identifies the point that is inaccurate and suggests a more accurate alternative. Not to proceed in this manner obscures the truth. Whether new ideas correspond to a critic's ideology is not a sound basis for judging the extent to which the new ideas reflect reality.

The National Interest and the Human Interest describes the differences between (1) an explicit, innovative ideology (based on values which define the human interest) and (2) an implicit, frequently disguised, widely held ideology (which accepts traditional definitions and assessments of the national interest). To measure policies that serve the national interest against policies that serve the human interest is admittedly a different way of thinking than normally guides U.S. or Soviet policymaking. But that does not mean that this new approach is any more ideological or less accurate empirically than the familiar approach....

Presumably Weigel would (as I do) encourage us to test the beliefs of our own ideology against the hard facts of political reality in order to minimize distortion and dogma. With this purpose in mind, it is significant that although Weigel several times characterizes *The National Interest and the Human Interest* as ideological, he does not attempt to show that the evidence in the detailed case studies either is factually incorrect or in aggregate leads to any conclusions other than those stated. Indeed, policies aimed at meeting the needs of the human species often *do* conflict with policies shaped by the national interest as traditionally defined.

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EL SALVADOR ET AL.

To the Editors: According to Thomas E. Quigley ("Great Decisions '81"—Latin America and the Caribbean, *Worldview*, January), the Roman Catholic Church has provided "a framework, a language, and a motivation" for revolution among "the poor and oppressed" of El Salvador and other nations of Latin America. This view begs two questions: (1) How sound is the *substance* of this new Catholic teaching? (2) Does the Church also supply military training, rifles, grenade launchers, bombs, mines, electronic detonators, salaries for guerrilla armies, field communications, and trained military leaders—and if not, who does?

Quigley would have us believe that "the people" of El Salvador support the armed guerrilla army (estimated at five to ten thousand well-trained cadres and forty thousand irregular militia). Yet "the people" did not support the "final offensive" publicly announced for early January, 1981. They did not support a general strike called in their name.

Besides, a majority of the Catholic clergy in El Salvador does not support the guerrillas. Bishop Rivera Y Damas, using traditional just war theory, seemed to tell his congregation in a sermon in January that revolution is not yet justified. He saw plenty of injustice in the present regime; he saw insufficient reason for hope that the revolution would bring about greater justice. He clearly said that one condition for just revolution has been met; he shrank back from a decision about the other three conditions.

While Quigley believes that the new theology of revolution carried by some of "the Church's pastoral agents, priests, sisters, and lay catechists" will bring greater justice, other Catholics in Central America, North America, and elsewhere read the evidence quite differently. Even independently of geopolitical considerations, the case that "liberation theology" brings genuine liberation is dubious. Nicaragua and Cuba are good evidence against it.

I would oppose a leftist revolution in El Salvador on its own merits. I also oppose it for geopolitical reasons. The Soviet Union is currently supporting Cuba at the level of $12 million a day. Cuban and Nicaraguan military officers have been training El Salvadoreans in units of as many as a hundred at a time,

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