

What About the U.N.?

To the Editors: *Worldview* is the most interesting, provocative, and thoroughly rewarding magazine that comes to my study. I like the fact that it deals realistically with the problems of the world from a spiritual perspective.

In the April issue I was especially moved by three articles. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Richard A. Falk made real contributions in their comments on "That Person Should Be the Next President Who..."; and Marjorie Heale and James Young performed a real service in reminding us of the greatness of the practical idealist who governs Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda.

The following words of this true statesman have profound meaning not only for Africa but even more for the whole Human Family: "...the goal should be to remove the breeding grounds of violence. To work for the simple Christian idea, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' You see, I believe it's a mistake to separate politics from spiritual development....Nonviolence should not be confined to a single situation....In its deeper meaning it is love for humanity—the implementation of Humanism. The program of Humanism sees man's development in terms of an all-round development—body, mind, and soul."

Kenneth Kaunda, except for his pressing responsibilities in Africa, might well qualify to become the next secretary-general of the United Nations.

Now, one negative note: Why did Rosemary Ruether and Richard Falk, in their otherwise brilliant and prescient articles on the qualifications which should be required in the Presidency, say nothing about the United Nations?

Ms. Ruether said: "The United States and the world face in the next decade what may well be apocalyptic prospects for human survival—in the areas of nuclear war, world famine, energy, rising expectations of minorities and of former colonized nations in the face of dwindling resources, at least as those resources are used and distributed by present international capitalism. The ecological costs of mismanagement of the globe for the benefit of the rich mount daily until they threaten the organic structure of life itself."

This is very well put. Her article should be reprinted and distributed to

every member of Congress, to the President, and many others. Nevertheless, my question remains: Why does she not give credit to the U.N. and its agencies, which recognize these problems and are trying to do something about them?

With Falk's article it's the same thing: a brilliant article calling for the one-world consciousness and one-world action to cope with one-world problems, but not the slightest reference to the U.N. Why?

If the answer is that the United Nations is so deficient that it can't handle the problems that Ms. Ruether listed—and others—let's say so, and get on with the task of making it more efficient and effective. Is the answer world government? If so, let's get on with the job of building the world government on the U.N. foundation.

If, on the other hand, it is, as I believe, a matter of supporting the United Nations and slowly erecting a superstructure of law and justice for all the Human Family, let us rise to the challenge.

Palmer VanGundy

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Richard A. Falk Responds:

Mr. Van Gundy's response to my prescriptions for the Presidency is so positive that I am naturally disposed to be receptive to his criticisms. And so I would agree that it was a mistake not to mention the role of the United Nations in facilitating the transition from geopolitical to planetary preoccupations over the course of the next decade or so. I regard the United Nations in a generally positive light, providing the world with a primary forum for discussion that can help shape and reflect a new consensus on what is needed normatively and functionally, namely, equity for the poor, human rights for all peoples, and central guidance mechanisms for planning and coordinating policy on a planetary scale.

To translate this consensus into behavioral patterns and institutional forms will require some prior fundamental reorientations of outlook by ruling groups and their publics in domestic societies. It is an educational and political challenge that confronts many obstacles. Thus, in the period ahead the critical arena for global reform is domestic society. In American terms this emphasis could be expressed through a credible effort to link our

behavior toward others with the ideals we proclaim for ourselves. Interdependence also has a normative dimension; Vietnam implies Watergate. For better or worse there will be continuity between our foreign policy and the governance of domestic society. The United Nations is only marginally connected, in my view, with this central struggle to forge a new positive vision of America's role in the world.

One final comment. Often implicit in enthusiasm for the United Nations is an uncritical acceptance of centralized patterns of global governance as a desirable sequel to the state system. Such a prospect deserves the closest scrutiny. My own positive vision heavily emphasizes the decentralization of power and the deconcentration of wealth within advanced industrial states. In such a setting, the image of "central guidance" is meant to imply a minimalist notion of control and bureaucracy. Shifts in values, especially a "cultural revolution," are the essential precondition for a just and peaceful world system. Institutional innovations, within or without the United Nations, can do little without such a cultural revolution and will be almost automatically forthcoming with it.

The Sixties Without End

To the Editors: [Re James Finn's Excursus, "Looking Back, Hoping Forward," *Worldview*, January/February.] The sixties were proclaimed "ended"—and then in 1971 the two biggest demons happened: Mayday in D.C. and San Francisco. In 1975 (January) the biggest antiwar lobby did its thing and sorely distressed Ambassador Martin. CIA exposed all over.

In early '76 Congress votes to end CIA aid to certain Angolan forces.

Most of all, 54 per cent of eligible voters don't register in California, few people vote everywhere.

Anti-imperialistic sentiments are strong among many sectors of American people.

"Traditional issues of jobs, savings, profits, inflation" are now being analyzed in terms of neocolonialism and imperialism. *Marxism* is being studied everywhere—*Leninism-Maoism-new-ism*. Great!

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