

# Correspondence

## IRS vs. the Churches

To the Editors: Frank Patton's lament ("Internal Revenue vs. the Prophets," June, 1972) about Government repression of the churches' social witness is a necessary service, no doubt. But it also misses several important points. First, he does not mention that this problem is not his unique discovery; there are several bills in Congress now that are designed to prevent precisely the kind of IRS intimidation that Patton deplors. Second, why focus so singularly on the churches? The fact is that foundations and other voluntary associations are encountering the same difficulties, and, no disrespect to the churches intended, their social concern has frequently been more evident and effective than the concern of religious organizations.

Third, is there not a legitimate concern on the part of the State to prevent excessive political powers being wielded by essentially private agencies that are in no way accountable to the public? This is the other side of the foundation picture, especially where wealthy individuals can establish well-endowed foundations to push their own political viewpoint, whether conservative, liberal, or other. One thinks, for example, of the disruptive influence of the Ford Foundation in sponsoring irresponsible educational experiments in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville sections of Brooklyn. Fourth and finally, perhaps one of the reasons for the growing resistance to the churches' social involvement is that groups such as the National Council of Churches have lost contact with their own constituencies. In NCC pronouncements it is frequently impossible to distinguish any peculiarly "religious" or "Christian" content in positions that seem rather automatically to reflect whatever is "in" among the liberal-radical intellectual establishment. Maybe if the quality of religious social involvement were improved, the Government would be better able to distinguish between

genuinely religious and purely partisan political activities. Instead of simply deploring IRS policy, we should perhaps be grateful to the Government for raising some fundamental questions about the role of religion in American society.

Joseph Fatato  
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Frank Patton responds:

The problem of IRS and Government interest in the activities of non-profit groups is hardly my unique discovery, but it surely isn't the unique discovery of the foundations. The latter were marvelously silent about the subject until, to their shock and amazement, Congress passed the Tax Reform Act of 1969, imposing severe restrictions on the retention and use of funds by foundations like Ford, Rockefeller, etc., the so-called "private foundations." They began to yell, in a dignified way, of course, and legislation was introduced to permit specified efforts by certain non-profit groups to influence legislation. It's not at all a sure thing that any such legislation will be adopted.

Why focus on the churches? Why not? One hesitates to say it, but churches *are* different from other groups. Churches enjoy the protections of the freedom of religion provision of the First Amendment, and it may well be that churches have a special commission to affect public affairs insofar as the public affairs relate to the church. Aha, but what relates to the church? Should the church make that determination or should the State? At this point I would be happier that the church determine it because I fear the church a good deal less than the State. Others may differ.

But we must remember that there are two political functions at issue. One is the right to participate in partisan political campaigns; the tax laws (and I) say that churches, as well as foundations, educational institutions and other exempt organizations had better keep hands off. But the other is the right to speak, to influence, to be heard on public issues—a different bag entirely. We

need to hear the church, just as we need to hear all groups and people, and we need not fear information as long as we hear it from all sides. At the point the Government chokes off the right to speak, then we have got troubles. (We must even hear from the whipping boy, the National Council of Churches, which is considered shockingly radical when, in fact, it is often more conservative than the national administrations of its member churches.)

Finally, the role of the church in public affairs is a new game now. The 1950's and '60's are over, and the church is looking for a new identity. There is, of course, the danger of the church's trying to be "with it" too much, to be merely visibly relevant and contemporaneous, and to perform for the media. But that is only to say that the church must set itself the task of defining a serious role in public affairs in the coming years. Religious worship must be relevant and significant and must reflect more than the stylistic fads of the moment. Therefore, the church must measure its response to public issues, and perhaps be far more sophisticated about its response; but to fail to respond would be to recede, to diminish and perhaps to perish.

## The Greek Colonels

To the Editors: In his *Art of Clear Writing*, Rudolf Flesch developed a Fog Index for rating the clarity of a piece of writing. It penalizes lengthy sentences, prevalence of polysyllabic words and avoidance of the concrete in favor of abstractions. David Holden's piece on "The Greek Colonels and Their Critics" (*World-view*, May) rates less than a "fair" by this stylistic index, which judges only the *how* and not the *what* in written expression.

There are also *functional* fogs in need of an index. The criteria for rating the credibility of the *what* would necessarily be more amorphous and subjective than Flesch's. . . . Pragmatically, though, stylistic fog usually serves as accessory to functional fog. [continued on p. 62]

States and China, and by the Soviet Union's reservations about all these alternatives. In Laos the likelihood is that the longer the war continues the less there will be left, as China, Thailand, and North Vietnam compete for influence. The Pathet Lao would be left as a rump in the middle.

"Thailand is the most secure State in the area. While Laos and Cambodia wait on events, Thailand is in a position to decide for itself. How its policies evolve will depend on its assessment of China's and North Vietnam's intentions. . . .

"Of the outer ring of countries—Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines—only the first could

claim that its insurgency problem could be directly affected by events in Vietnam. A victory to Hanoi and the bonus of an American humiliation would boost the morale of rebel groups in these countries. But the longer term effect of a settlement might well be debilitating to the rebels and governments alike. President Park of South Korea (although with North Korea, Taiwan, and Japan in a related but separate web of political relations) reacted last year to Sino-American detente with a state of emergency. The countries of South-east Asia will find the atmosphere of post-Vietnam as hard to live with as the period of the war."

PAMPHILUS

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[from p. 2]

Consider Holden's apologetic for the colonels' "wholesale removal of judges who delivered judgments they did not like . . . political censorship even of . . . classical Greek dramas . . . immediate imprisonment of Andreas Papandreou with threat of bringing him to book for the Aspida affair . . ." and other "detentions" of dissidents. Holden attributes these misdemeanors to the junta's "impressive inability to understand the first principles of either diplomacy or public relations!"

Flesch would comment on the 69-word sentence which included these charges. A functional-fog index would catch the queasiness in the reference to Papandreou: The colonels threaten to "bring him to book for the Aspida affair on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government. . . ." Why, since they had summarily disposed of cases far less grave, did they release him untried? Holden implies that he avoided prosecution—and, as a matter of course, execution—because he had "gained . . . widespread sympathy as a noble martyr. . . ."

Certainly there was "widespread" mobilization of the intellectual community on his behalf. Marquis Childs reported LBJ's instructions to the State Department, after receiving voluminous appeals from American academicians—"Tell those Greek bastards to let that son-of-a-bitch what's-his-name go." Elsewhere, however, Holden pictures the junta as being impervious to such pressures.

To refute "the theory of a CIA conspiracy," he finds in the colonels

"men of great determination and independence of mind," whose rejection of attempted pressure by "America's partial suspension of military aid" argues against "the view that they had been Washington's chosen instrument" for a *coup d'état*. It seems to argue equally against their yielding to moral duress and releasing an inveterate enemy, against whom, Holden infers, they had valid proofs of treason.

I have been led to believe that the regime's case rested on two affidavits testifying to overheard remarks by Papandreou in favor of the Aspida conspiracy of leftist army officers. And that it was only after the two affiants had fled to America and had publicly repudiated their affidavits, claiming coercion, that the junta found "bringing him to book" inadvisable. If this version is false, Holden should plainly say so instead of befogging the issues—as he also does that of systematic torture.

Holden correctly warns against simplistic moralizing over a very tangled can of worms indeed. However, simplistic value judgments concealed in functional fog don't aid in the untangling. Peyton Bryan Smithville, Tex.

## In General

To the Editors: I came across my first copy of *Worldview* on a newsstand, and bought it to read what Gyorgy Lukács had to say about Marxist theory ("The Failure of Marxist Theory," May). Perhaps you will allow a comment on that article and on that issue of your magazine.

Lukács was, as you note, one of the, if not the, leading Marxist theorists

of our century. In the light of the whole issue it is appallingly clear why you chose to publish this interview. It is Lukács as an old man, clearly discouraged and, in a moment of weakness, inclined to disparage contemporary socialism. It is hardly representative of Lukács's thought. The advantage of that kind of article to the editors of *Worldview* is obvious when one looks at the other articles in the same issue, almost all consistently reactionary: McNerny talks about "original sin" in order to undermine whatever democratic impulses there might be in American political history; Shirley Garrett, in "Those Ungrateful Chinese," almost completely whitewashes the imperialistic history of missionaries in China; Ashok Kapur discusses India's foreign policy in a way that completely agrees with the discredited notions of balance of power; surely no one not in the pay of the Greek colonels will doubt that Holden's piece on the Greek junta is little more than propaganda; and Neuhaus, while he used to be known as a radical, can hardly be taken seriously when he talks about U.S. "responsibility" in the Third World. As for the lead article by John Bennett, such theological meanderings only serve an obscurantist purpose, distracting from the revolutionary struggle. . . .

Somewhere I heard that *Worldview* was a journal with no political or ideological line. After the May issue, I've filed that little piece of information along with other myths and fairy tales about Establishment journalism.

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