

to the editors of *Worldview*. The following came in early response.

Philip Prichard  
*Seattle, Wash.*

"I am glad you sent me that interesting article on Mexico by Robert Drysdale that was in the November issue of *Worldview*. Drysdale's comments about "The Legacy of Echeverría" are mainly true and show that the writer was knowledgeable about his subject. When reading the article I was impressed by its truth, for that is the feeling here even today about our former President Echeverría. Definitely his administration did some good things, and yet there were some things done that were ill-advised for Mexico.

"The *Worldview* article on Mexico touches on several aspects of our present situation and condition both truthfully and with considerable perceptiveness. I would say it is one of the all too rare United States reports on my country which really explores and tries to explain something of our reality.

"As I think Robert Drysdale would understand, here in Mexico we now have great hope and confidence in President Portillo and his administration. I hope that your discerning United States writer whose article on Mexico was in that November *Worldview* magazine will continue to write of my country so that the United States and Mexico will come to have a much increased understanding of each other. So thanks again for sending the Drysdale report, for it is not only interesting and informative to me but to all those of my countrymen with whom I find opportunity to discuss it. It has been good to read and reflect on that clear and discerning outside viewpoint on Mexico."

José Luis

*Guadalajara, Mexico*

## Defense of Taiwan

To the Editors: Sentiments expressed in Richard John Neuhaus's "Excursus" on the U.S. commitment to Taiwan ("American Pragmatism on Panama and China," October, 1977) represent the only honorable course that the U.S. can follow in the event other considerations do not override them. The United States, in its Defense Treaty, has solemnly pledged to defend Taiwan in the event of attack and to preserve its

free choice as to its own form of government. This pledge, when given, was solemn and binding and cannot be lightly dismissed.

Like Mr. Neuhaus, I consider pledges to carry a deep-seated meaning. However, a number of factors in the situation in the Far East have given me pause. Unfortunately these factors have not, to my knowledge, been widely discussed in the normalization debate.

The first factor is Japan. Defense of Taiwan cannot be the sole responsibility of the U.S. Japan's wishes must be considered.

Taiwan's defense directly affects Japan. Should the Japanese decide that a free Taiwan is essential to its security, then Japan must contribute to Taiwan's defense—in alliance with the U.S. or on its own. Japan's Self-Defense Force has the naval and air capability to bolster vastly the Taiwanese army and to control the straits. Its industrial strength and weapons' capability plus its large merchant marine give Japan the strength it needs to back up its forces.

Second, from Japan's point of view, Taiwan's defense and South Korea's defense are linked. The golden triangle of trade in Northeast Asia integrates both countries into Japan's economy. Taiwan and Korea are essential to Japan's inner defense lines. And the loss of one weakens the defense of the other. Therefore Japan's interests are paramount.

But this also means that the combined strength of the Japan-Taiwan-South Korea triangle is available to defend Taiwan. Already close links between Korea and Taiwan are in place. Japan's cementing link to this triangle gives the forces of this area the muscle they need to fend off any intervention short of nuclear war.

Because of this alliance there is little need for U.S. support, except through the provision of strategic nuclear support to serve as an umbrella. The U.S. has already pledged this support to Japan through its 1961 treaty. Moreover, U.S. nuclear support to Japan is triggered, not only by a treaty, but because Japan is strategically important to the defense of the U.S. By contrast, Taiwan and South Korea have importance to the U.S. only because of their relation to Japan's defenses. Individually or in combination, the fall of Taiwan and/or South Korea would not directly threaten the U.S.

Given these facts, the defense of Taiwan is an issue that, strictly speaking, is in the province of Japan. This becomes readily apparent when it is realized that the U.S. would hesitate to defend Taiwan were Japan to object. Japan's importance to our defense gives that country a strong veto power over our own actions. Indeed, Taiwan could not be defended in the face of Japanese hostility. Japan's views must be taken into account.

In light of this very real situation one wonders what the mutual defense treaty with Taiwan means. On the one hand Japan's security—not ours—is at stake, and Japan has the means and the need to play a major role. On the other hand Japan has veto power over our own desires.

Therefore Japan is the pivotal power in the region and has the responsibility for Taiwan. The emergence of Japan has changed the underlying conditions upon which the U.S. mutual defense treaty with Taiwan was based.

Thus it is critical to ascertain Japan's intentions relative to Taiwan. So far Japan has played China's game but has kept "trade" relations with Taiwan. What Japan's reaction to a Communist invasion of Taiwan would be are unknown. But it is certain that the communization of Taiwan would be a disaster to Japan. Observers have not been able to ascertain Japan's intentions because of the U.S. treaty that masks the need for more explicit statements. In this sense the situation is analogous to South Korea, where U.S. troop pullouts bring the day closer for Japanese assumption of support for the South Koreans.

The second factor is U.S. troop pullouts. Defense of Asia, whether in Korea, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, or the Philippines, is passing into the hands of Asians, except for nuclear support. This transition means less need for a U.S. frontline role against China and greater need for a strategic role to offset growing Soviet strength via its naval buildup in the Pacific and along the Chinese border. This new role does not require U.S. commitments to send ground forces to Taiwan or anywhere else because this is an Asian job. Nor does it require U.S. pledges to local powers, except strategically.

The third factor is the Soviet buildup, which threatens all of Asia from the Indian Ocean to the Sea of Japan and