

sued their own economic and strategic interests, and drew boundaries that reflected imperial designs and improvisations far more than they did the wishes of the subject populations. Israel and Lebanon, together the axis of Middle Eastern instability and violence today, were both products of the woefully misconceived and mismanaged mandate system.

In the end, the Eastern Question and the mandate experience created a regional system characterized by extremely tenuous and "penetrable" nation-states. Every Arab

country in the fertile crescent has been, and remains, vulnerable to tribal or sectarian conflict within its own borders. Unpersuaded by the nationalist claims of their governments, fertile crescent Arabs have taken refuge in more universal, and less practical, ideologies—Pan Arabism and religious fundamentalism.

Subverted from within and buffeted from without, the nation-state in its classical, liberal formulation enjoys little legitimacy in the Middle East today. If anything, religion rather than nation has prevailed as the foundation of political community in the Middle

East. This was a stable and commodious arrangement in the early centuries of Ottoman rule, but in an age of armed and insecure regimes, political religion has taken on a volatile, almost apocalyptic, character. Secularist Arab politicians have long warned of the evils of armed religion, but few predicted the chaos and tragedy of the '80s—what some call the "triumph of the three ayatollahs": Ruhollah Khomeini, Bashir Jumayel, and Menachem Begin. To open today's newspaper is to share the cynicism and frustration so many Arabs live and breathe. **WV**

## Correspondence

### MISUSING MISS MANNERS

To the Editors: This week, along with the revelation of Soviet complicity in the attempted assassination of the pope and confirmation of the terrorist bombing of Commander Zero's Costa Rica news conference, *Worldview* arrived bringing Wilson Carey McWilliams ruminations on international etiquette ("Mr. Reagan and Miss Manners," Under Cover, May).

His citation of Little Miss Manners' dictum 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 spoiled 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 Sakharovs 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 brutality. Elsewhere, the governments are often 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 Indians.

If Mr. McWilliams's 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 epithets. 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 destined to be victimized. Civilized states know how to use force: It would be a rash mugger, 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 nothing 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 Nicaragua, and that decision imposes certain 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.

### 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 Agriculture. 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 rural 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 understand 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 volunteer 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 accomplish such miracles. But such good works barely scratch the surface of the massive job facing the High Commissioner for Refugees.