

Correspondence

"Belfast Blues"

To the Editors: Richard J. Neuhaus's "Belfast Blue" (*Worldview*, November and December, 1973) is a penetrating and insightful report on the conflict in Northern Ireland as it enters a new constitutional stage of power-sharing and outreach to the Republic. As he is aware, the new chapter is itself controversial, especially from extremist viewpoints. Neuhaus offers insights into the sources, complexities and options which are often absent in the American media's stress on the pathological and political violence and the "religious" aspects of the struggle.

Among the helpful insights are those dealing with the Catholic clergy's lukewarm support of unification, the less than shocked outlook on Paisley of élites in both communities, and the lack of Protestant concern with economic justice for the minority.

Neuhaus's analysis of causes, however, is arguable. He is convincing in rejecting class war as basic, but he moves too soon to dismiss nationalism and settler/native explanations of the conflict. Adopting Conor Cruise O'Brien's dubious thesis about the persistence of "religious states" in Ireland, Neuhaus fails to notice that all of these variables are involved in Northern Ireland's conflict. The "religious" should be given the least weight. Few are debating the Council of Trent and Calvin's teachings, though doubtless the heritage of earlier debates and associated violence is present. "Catholic" and "Protestant" should be written as "nationalist" and "loyalist" to give a truer picture.

In addition Neuhaus overidentifies Irish nationalism with the Sinn Féin-IRA, especially the Provisionals, and implicitly goes beyond this error to expect Irish nationalism to testify against itself by accepting the veto power (the majority consent doctrine) of the Northern loyalists on unification.

Perhaps this expectation is basic

to the New Ireland movement of O'Brien, the policies of the Heath and Dublin governments and the stand of the few Northern liberals. If this is the case, the prospect of protracted conflict (not necessarily violent) should be included in realistic appraisals of the gloomy scene Neuhaus portrays for us. Ireland is still an instance of incomplete decolonization and nation-building.

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The Virgin of Zeitoun

To the Editors: Thank you for one of very few U.S. published articles about the Virgin of Zeitoun which was printed in the September, 1973, issue of *Worldview*. Virginia Nelson has done a creditable job of describing the events—the awesomeness of which most of us still can hardly comprehend: that the Virgin appeared, was clearly and photographically visible to thousands, Copts, Muslims and unbelievers, not for a few minutes but off and on for over a year; that cures which have taken place have been documented with before-and-after scientific tests like X-rays, lab tests, etc.; that she did not speak, so the meaning and significance are imbedded deep in the hearts of each who has seen Her.

Having known about the Virgin's appearance for a number of years through Egyptian friends who immigrated to the United States and through some who revealed their experiences in the company of people who would listen and not label them "mentally unstable," it amazes me that more people in the world don't know of this powerful happening which has turned thousands in the Middle East to God, be they Christian or Muslim. Ms. Nelson has captured another important aspect when she points to the various meanings attributed to Her appearance. In the time of Christ's appearance the people had various understandings of His mission. Today there are many about the Virgin of Zeitoun, political, economic, religious, sectarian. In

the years to come we will understand more fully, and the significance may simply be to turn the hearts of all humans to the Source of our Being, by whatever cultural name we call it.

Jean C. Goodrich

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The Peace Prize

To the Editors: My first reaction to the announcement that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnam's Politburo member Le Duc Tho had been awarded the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize was that someone had pulled off a marvelous joke, Taoist style. Someone had succeeded in bringing about a hilarious contradiction in order to reveal the naked truth of a tragic situation. I laughed, then laughed again—this time at my own laughter. . . . I even suspected that Jon Sannaes, who initiated the nomination, was a secret Taoist who wished to come out from the cold by way of an expensive international laughter. The apparently absurd statement by Mrs. Aase Lionae, chairwoman of the Nobel Committee, that "the accord—the 1973 Paris agreement—brought a wave of joy and hope for peace over the entire world," added to my suspicion. But there was no dancing in the streets of Washington, Paris, Saigon or elsewhere, as I recall.

My second reaction, a day later, was one of profound sadness (and, I must confess, some suppressed anger) when I read Dr. Kissinger's declaration: "When I shall receive the award together with my colleague in the search for peace in Vietnam, Le Duc Tho, I hope that that occasion will at last mark the end or symbolize the end of the anguish and the suffering that Vietnam has meant for so many millions of people around the world, and that both at home and abroad it will mark the beginning of a period of reconciliation." Coming from a person who approved of the Christmas B-52 blanket bombing of Hanoi, the statement recalled Tao Te Ching's words: "truthful words are not beau-

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