

Editorial

A Peculiar Faith

National Catholic News Service reported last week on the Supreme Court's ruling against Tony Alamo, head of the Tony and Susan Alamo Christian Foundation.

Alamo based his argument on freedom of religion, claiming that the government could not require him to pay minimum wages to the foundation's "volunteers."

But the court rejected this argument, finding instead that the foundation's many commercial enterprises — a construction company, gas station, restaurant, etc. — qualify it as a business subject to federal law.

Good for the court. Although the activity of Alamo and his "volunteers" cannot be taken seriously by well-informed and rational persons, it would be a mockery for the court to grant him exemption from legal requirements on the basis of freedom of religion — a principle he certainly does not uphold.

The message of nearly all religions, in both East and West, has been peace, love, and concern for one's fellow man. The message contained by the anti-Vatican posters — credit for which Alamo neither claims nor convincingly denies — is that of hate and what seems like an unholy vengeance.

Some posters proclaim that the swastika is a Jesuit symbol, while others warn that the Vatican's goal is to rule the world and stamp out all other religions.

Utter nonsense, yes! But, despite his supposed devotion to freedom of religion, one cannot help but wonder: If he had the power and the opportunity, what would Alamo do to the Vatican? Would he eventually seek to stamp out the Catholic Church and all of the good it does in the world?

So much for freedom of religion.

and Opinions

'War Horror' Is Communist Goal

To the Editor: Before You "Close the Book" (Editorial, April 17), I would like to say that I do not agree with (Carl) Sagan when he says "There is no doctrine, no religion or politics or anything else that is worth the extinction of the human species."

I do agree with Carl Sagan when he says "that nuclear war could end all human life on Earth," but then so could AIDS, abortion and homosexuality, or a collision with Mars or Venus, which Sagan the astronomer will tell you is possible but hardly probable.

Bring Nuclear Threat into Focus

To the Editor:

More deadly than "the bomb," mind conditioning is designed to program the American people to oppose the non-nuclear, space-based defensive system designed to destroy nuclear missiles incoming to this and other countries.

It is time that the followers of certain scientists, not specializing in this field, face the fact that the horrors they attribute to nuclear weaponry be put in focus. It is not nuclear weaponry that threatens; it is the Soviet possession of these weapons either for use or nuclear blackmail.

Those who write editorials based on certain scientists' conclusions should examine all evidence from

sequences in concrete, human terms — in Geneva, even as we speak.

What frightens me is not nuclear war, not a collision with Mars or Venus, not the ray guns of Han Solo, but the directive that "when a country is selected for attack, we must first set up before the youth of that land a mental barrage which will forever prohibit the possibility of that youth being molded into an armed force to oppose our invading armies.

Carl Sagan certainly qualifies as a liberal-minded professor and lecturer; his message is certainly one of "war horror," and your solution of everybody only dis-

cussing nuclear war certainly borders on pacifism and non-resistance.

Before I close the book, the strategist who outlined the directive mentioned above was Lenin (of Marx-Lenin fame), the man who engineered the successful Bolshevik take-over of the Russian Revolution and who is the architect of World Revolution.

Patrick Henry asked the question once before at a critical point in our fight for freedom, and I ask it now: Is life really so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?

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EDITOR'S NOTE: More than one reader misunderstood the editorial "Close the Book" (see also letter "Bringing Nuclear Threat into Perspective"), perhaps because its point was too subtly made. The intention of the article was neither to oppose the Strategic Defense Initiative — an argument we prefer to leave to the experts — nor to promote non-resistance.

The intention was to point out that the use of such terminology — especially when combined with high-tech visual simulations of how the initiative might work — serves to make the notion of nuclear war less real and more the stuff of fantasy and adventure.

Not only does the media's gee-whiz presentation of material on the initiative blur the concrete information, it also makes it too easy for people to ignore that the decisions being made are serious, and merit their interest and concern.

As for Carl Sagan's contention that no ideological conflict is important enough to justify the destruction of the human race, we must agree. Life is God's greatest gift to us, and to destroy that gift by our own inability to negotiate is, as Pope John Paul II has said, "the ultimate crime."

This is not to say that we should be pacifists and allow ourselves to be controlled by forces whose beliefs are abhorrent to us. But we must find a way to avoid that by some means that will not cause the annihilation of humankind.

Seek the Truth About Nicaragua

To the Editor:

Having just returned from six weeks in Nicaragua, I was quite disturbed to see your publication of Robert Bart's letter (Opinion: "Contras Need Aid," April 17). It is one thing to have intellectual debate; it is quite another thing to experience the truth, to know the deadly results that blatant disinformation can cause.

Bart's claim of "nearly 8,000 people" being executed by the Sandinistas after the revolutionary victory, his charge that "people suspected of anti-government sympathies are forced into the militia or labor camps where they pick coffee beans," and his depiction of a government without the popular support of the people is indicative only of desperation at the prospect of contra aid being rejected. It is in no way indicative of the truth.

As usual, Bart offers no documentation; but more shocking is your printing of such outlandish material. There must be some minimum requirement to the

publication of dangerously deceptive statements.

Every major newspaper in this country and abroad reported on the abolition of capital punishment in Nicaragua immediately following the revolution. Scores of international observers, unrestricted in travel or access in that country, commented on the dramatic improvement of living conditions and human rights in that nation — especially compared to neighboring U.S.-supported dictatorships. I have provided the writings of unbiased, respected and converted experts to sustain these arguments as well as to illustrate the means by which our government and media misinforms the public — right here in the letters column of the Courier-Journal. I have tried to set a standard for Robert Bart to match regarding the documentation of statements.

Contrary to Bart's statement about the "democratic" nature of the contras are reams of evidence detailing their atrocities: civilian murders of men, women and

children; rapes; tortures; kidnappings; mutilations; and other abuses. The March 7 newspapers across this country were filled with the findings of Reed Brody, former assistant attorney general of New York, as well as Americas Watch's latest study of human rights in Nicaragua.

Mr. Brody's report, covering 145 sworn affidavits, documents "a distinct pattern" of murders, kidnappings, assaults and torture of civilians. In a random inquiry, the New York Times validated these findings. Americas Watch — which came to similar conclusions — is a well-known, independent investigating organization.

But, for me and thousands of other international observers who've gone to Nicaragua recently, the real proof of Nicaraguan reality is the evidence found there, speaking with the people who have lost family members to Reagan-sponsored brutality and seeing how "effective" our president's policy has been in stalling the progress of the revolution by forcing Nicaragua to spend almost half of its resources defending itself. The contras are not winning the hearts and minds of the people, but they are keeping Nicaragua from becoming the example it could be.

I have not returned home from Nicaragua to merely inform either, but to challenge you — readers, journalists, editors — not to disbelieve Robert Bart or to believe me, but to go to Nicaragua. You can fly round-trip for less than \$500; living expenses are cheap, and you can discover the truth for yourself. Seek and ye shall find.

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Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made, and the letters will reflect the writers' own styles.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.



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