



## Intervention and sin

BILL BIRMINGHAM'S JOY at hearing "for once" a defense of interventionism "based on revolutionary rather than reactionary premises" ("Opening Shots," May 1980) is sadly misplaced. Interventionism is always touted as being good for "the people." So what else is new?

Libertarians should speak kindly of no exercise of state power. We undermine our credibility in doing so. This is true even if the kind words are for apologists for Soviet interventionism. Let not our opposition to U.S. imperialism blind us to the sins of other governments.

SHELDON RICHMAN  
Arlington, VA

## Birmingham replies:

IT IS SHELDON RICHMAN's criticisms that are "sadly misplaced." The paragraph in question was a

summary of Andrew Kopkind's "One - and - a - half (Strangled) Cheers for the USSR" (*Village Voice*, February 4, 1980). Kopkind points out that much of what we are taught to consider Soviet "aggression" — he does not include Afghanistan — is in fact aid to popular revolutionary movements against various "Free World" despotisms. He further points out that the mere existence of Soviet power acts as a brake on American counter-revolutionary actions. (Can anyone doubt that were it not for the Soviet presence just across the border, Jimmy Carter would have long since sent the Marines into Iran?) He concludes, with some justice, "hardly a single war of colonial liberation or social revolution would have succeeded in these [past] three decades" without Soviet assistance. Kopkind is not a Soviet "apologist"; while "acknowledg[ing] the USSR's historic help" to oppressed Third World peoples, he points out, "They all paid a heavy price for that help." (Hence the "One-and-a-half

(Strangled) Cheers.") To which I replied, and I quote: "I think Kopkind both underestimates the price of that help and overestimates its importance," — I'd give Russia only three-quarters of a cheer, if that — "but it's nice to hear for once, a defense of interventionism based on revolutionary rather than reactionary premises: reminiscent of fellow libertarian Karl Hess's opinion that if we had to get involved in Vietnam, it should have been on the side of the Viet Cong."

I am frankly astonished that this should occasion any controversy among *LR*'s readers, but it evidently has. So, to summarize what I had hoped would be obvious to the careful reader:

I do not advocate interventionism, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, any more than Karl Hess advocated U.S. aid to the National Liberation Front.

I do not believe that interventionism is good for "the people," but intervention on behalf of revolutionary movements, as (sometimes) practiced by the USSR, would be more de-

serving of such an accolade than intervention on behalf of despotic states, as (invariably) practiced by the United States. (As to that, see my review soon to be published in *LR*, of the recent book by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman.)

It follows that there is no need for a holy war against Soviet interventionism. Indeed, the American variety is far more to be feared.

Condemning every exercise of state power equally, while possessing a superficial rhetorical appeal, glosses over this important fact.

I recommended the Kopkind article, with qualifications, because these things need to be pointed out in the current cold war climate.

Readers who have trouble appreciating the nature of and need for revolution, by the way, should read Murray Rothbard's seminal essay "Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty" (available from the Cato Institute). And while I'm flattered that Richman should be so interested in keeping me to the libertarian straight and narrow, I would be interested in seeing his response to the recent editorial in *Reason*, which denounces non-intervention and calls for a military alliance with Red China. Or has he given up all hope for *its* credibility?

## And Childs rejoins:

IN REREADING THE BILL Birmingham "Opening Shot" in question, Sheldon Richman's letter, and Birmingham's response, I really have to side with Richman rather than Birmingham. The key truth in Richman's letter, I think, is his claim that Birmingham was "speak[ing] kindly" of Soviet interventionism. This particularly stands out in the context of "Opening Shots" as a whole, which is not known for making kind remarks of any sort, but rather for heaping withering ridicule and moral condemnation on mostly de-

serving public figures and policies. Birmingham also seems to accept for the most part Kopkind's statement that "the U.S. gets the dictators and the ruling classes and the Soviet Union gets the masses and the revolutionary movements." But what about Eastern Europe, Cuba, and Vietnam? What about the "oppressed masses" *there*? The Soviets have also backed Qaddafi in Libya and other dictators wherever it has suited their purposes. Another direct counter-example to Kopkind's claim is Uganda, where the "revolutionary" Idi Amin came to power partly with British and Israeli help, but was heavily supported by the Soviet Union once he had fastened his grip on the "masses" of that country. Finally, let us not forget the series of (as of this date) three successive Soviet-supported dictators in Afghanistan.

I don't want to take up Birmingham's response point-by-point, for this one "Opening Shot" item has already been blown out of all proportion as far as both he and I are concerned. But I will state *LR*'s policy bluntly: we condemn all intervention by all governments in the affairs of other countries, whether it is U.S. intervention in Iran or elsewhere in the Third World, Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, support for Fidel Castro and war against the Afghans, or Great Britain's domination of Northern Ireland and interference in the New Hebrides. We want an end to colonialism, imperialism, "aid" to various regimes *and* to revolutionary movements — to interference of *any* kind. We will cheer on revolutionary movements which overthrow tyranny, and condemn the revolutionaries when and if they become despots and tyrants themselves. What we do support is the development of an international libertarian movement which will become revolutionary in

those areas of the world where revolution is needed to throw off tyranny — whether in Africa, Latin American, Asia, Eastern Europe, or the Soviet Union itself.

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## Jack Kemp's ghost speaks:

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IN HIS REVIEW OF REPRESENTATIVE Kemp's *American Renaissance* [February], David Lampo expresses concern that my assistance with the book displays some undefined danger that libertarians may be co-opted by conservatives. Obviously, it could be interpreted as the exact opposite — as a libertarian influence on conservative proposals — but that too would not be quite right.

The function of a professional ghost writer or speech writer is not to put his own views into someone else's mouth, but to help the author express his own views. Contrary to the cartoon, neither Kemp nor Martin Anderson leads Reagan around by the nose, nor do Jude Wanniski and I lead Kemp (or each other) around by the nose. We are all quite independent individuals, and can at best influence each other by persuasion.

My participation in the book was not "rumored," but is explicitly acknowledged (along with Bruce Bartlett and others) on the first page. My contribution consisted mainly of the chapters on inflation and energy that Lampo found "quite good," though there is plenty of Kemp's own hand even there. I believe Kemp was almost as uneasy about the orthodox Republican defense chapter as were Wanniski and I, and that the preceding chapter is more representative of his foreign policy views.

In a few spots, Lampo misinterprets Kemp. When the book speaks of Republicans helping to load the

wagon, Mr. Kemp clearly is not referring to "being pro-business" but to tax incentives for individual initiative. Lampo says Kemp does not possess "the will to push for even ... modest spending cuts," yet Chapter 5 is mainly devoted to some potentially quite huge cuts in federal grants and transfer payments. Kemp explicitly argues that a balanced budget would be helpful, but not if it's balanced on the backs of the taxpayers.

Every book necessarily leaves something out, so that pointing out errors of omission (such as victimless crimes) is rather silly. Kemp's book is mainly about economic policies to unleash economic progress without inflation. It is also a defense of decentralization and democracy. It was not intended to be an argument for individual rights, though there are scattered reminders that individuals "constitute the essence and purpose of any society and economy." The concept of rights is likewise implied in such passages as this: "the whole idea that political officials should dictate what a person's labor or property is worth, through guidelines or controls, strikes me as morally offensive and politically dangerous."

Insofar as Kemp's rather novel ideas can be classified, I suppose they fall within the Kristol brand of neoconservatism, much of which (as Bruce Bartlett wrote in your January issue) is "extremely important and useful for libertarians." By all means debate any weak points, but don't use them as a reason to ignore the strong.

ALAN REYNOLDS  
Chicago, IL

## Lampo replies:

MR. REYNOLDS, AN economist I have always enjoyed reading, has raised several issues which are worthy of examination.

First of all, Mr. Reynolds 5

questions my concern about his hand in writing the book. My concern is quite simply this: the libertarian movement has for many decades been submerged in the conservative movement, with all its militarism, its hate of civil liberties, and its contempt for diversity. Thanks to a few courageous individuals, libertarians now possess a separate and flourishing movement of their own. When well-known libertarians like Mr. Reynolds expend their time and talents writing books for (and therefore promoting) people like Jack Kemp, they promote anything but libertarianism. As a libertarian, I am interested in building *our* movement, not the political careers of conservatives like Kemp.

Point Two: Every book does indeed leave something out, but I don't consider it "silly" to criticize Kemp for leaving out victimless crime. I *do* consider it characteristic of conservative political manifestoes. They always omit mention of this kind of issue and they do so with good reason. Most conservatives are very reactionary on these questions, and certainly Mr. Reynolds is aware of this. To call these views a "weak point" is a bit of an understatement.

Point Three: It is not enough to imply the existence of individual rights. Every influential political movement in history, from classical liberalism to Marxism, has had a strong moral base. If those who believe in liberty expect ultimately to be successful, they must have one also, and, in fact, they do. It is the concept of individual rights and self-ownership, and it must be explicitly promoted.

Point Four: Mr. Reynolds is correct that Congressman Kemp devotes a chapter to cutting federal spending. Yet in that same chapter he states that defense spending "cannot safely decline at all," and that, as bad as all this federal spending is, there

is really not much we can do about it because "this is after all, the federal safety net we're talking about." Hardly a ringing defense of cutting federal spending.

Finally, I do not consider Kemp's ideas "novel." They seem to me to be, well, conservative, i.e., some free market, some state intervention. I seriously doubt that Mr. Kemp's philosophy is going to inspire very many people.

## J. Neil Schulman speaks:

I TRIED—I REALLY, TRULY tried—to restrain myself from writing this letter in reply to Michael Grossberg's review of my novel, *Alongside Night* [March]. "Ignore him; he has no literary credentials whatsoever," I told myself. "He's writing only to libertarians; they'll find the book anyway," I went on. "He says nice things about you, even though his overall view is negative." And finally, "If you've won any fans on the book, maybe they'll write letters in favor of the book."

But it was all to no avail. I have received other, more negative reviews, calmly, but every time I read Grossberg's review I want to scream, throw a tantrum, and wring his neck.

It is not only that he tells Dr. Szasz what he *really* meant by calling my book, "the *Atlas Shrugged* of the '80s." Obviously Dr. Szasz, who has spent the bulk of his career writing in opposition to those who would tell other people what they *really* think, is not entitled to be asked what he meant. It is not that Grossberg selectively quotes Anthony Burgess's endorsement on the book to leave out the one sentence on the book's *literary* merit: "A thrilling novel, crisply written, that fires the imagination as effectively as it stimulates the

feelings." It is not that Grossberg manages, in his review, to give away many of the novel's surprises. Nor is it that Grossberg, a supposed "Friend" of the Prometheus Awards Committee, which gives out awards for libertarian science fiction, chooses to use his review of my book as a vehicle for a polemic against the very concept of libertarian science fiction.

No. My objection to Grossberg is that his review is incompetent. He argues illogically and with contradictions, and thus fails to prove his contention—upon which his review stands or falls—that *Alongside Night* is a bad novel because the characterization is bad and the plot "implausible."

Let me take this characterization business first. *Alongside Night* is a novel of ideas, not a novel of character. Yes, a novel can be both—and very frankly, my second novel *will* be—but there is no necessity that a particular novel must conform to some from-on-high proclamation about how much of the material must address the personality, opinions, idiosyncrasies, habits, and development of its characters. A novel can be written with many ends in mind. Surely characterization is one of them, but it is not the only one, and I submit that a novel can be good without this emphasis, if emphasis on character would detract from *other* things the novelist is trying to do.

My characterization of my protagonist, Elliot Vreeland, is not "bad," it is merely concise. I characterize him by what he says, by what he does, by how—as viewpoint character—he interprets the world around him. If he is an "Elliot-in-Wonderland"—as Grossberg contends—then this is what he is supposed to be: a focal point for the reader to see the world I choose to show them—a world, by the way, just as logically illogical as Lewis Carroll's, for it is

our world just a little farther gone. Grossberg insults, by implication, every adult who has found Elliot realistic and plausible... and if I may say so, there are many. I submit the following from Howard Ruff as evidence: "Well, look, this is a fascinating book and you can sit here and debate this philosophy and you can say, 'Well, maybe I am not interested in that, or maybe it went over my head,' but when you get people that you get interested in like I did in this 17-year-old kid and his girlfriend, when you believe in them and you follow them through a very rationally structured world the way you did in your book, it all comes home and it becomes very important. ... Very interesting, human people in the book. I resonated to them." (*Ruff House*, March, 1980.)

And just in passing, I challenge Grossberg to find *anywhere* in the book that Elliot or anyone else acts like a tourist, "shocked by the familiar institutions of their own time and place." Elliot walks down the Fifth Avenue of his time, akin to a North African marketplace, without blinking an eye. So if he is shocked by what he sees in the revolutionary underground—a larger-than-life demonstration of the economics his father has taught him—is he not entitled to his shock?

Which brings us to this nonsense about plausibility. First off, there is nothing that says a work of fiction must present only those events which are plausible. A fictional world may choose any postulates necessary—no matter how implausible—so long as they are stuck to throughout... and even this is not necessary in a work of whimsy. True, there are many surprises in my book (at least to those who have not read Grossberg's review), but there is nothing inherently "implausible" about any of them. There are



no unexplained coincidences: all the surprises follow logically and inevitably from the premises upon which the story rests. I would imagine that there are much more difficult things to swallow in the science fiction of Norman Spinrad that Grossberg favors in other reviews than there are in the relatively mild postulates of *Alongside Night*.

And as one more piece of evidence in my defense, let me quote from the Sunday *Detroit News* of December 14th, 1979, a review of *Alongside Night* by News Special Writer Bud Foote: "Let me begin, then, with a disclaimer: I don't really agree with many of J. Neil Schulman's ideas about society or politics or money. But his first book, *Alongside*

*Night*, is as enjoyable a piece of cautionary fiction as I have read in some little time. It ought to sell well; it deserves to ... Like Rand and Heinlein, Schulman can forevermore tell a good story. The book moves. From beginning to end, it moves—never breathless, only occasionally contrived, all the ideas firmly embedded in the action ... *Alongside Night* is a fine piece of work, no matter what you might think of Schulman's ideas."

Would that I could say the same about Grossberg's review.

J. NEIL SCHULMAN  
Long Beach, CA

### Grossberg replies:

I ENJOY READING LIBERTARIAN science fiction—if

it's also *good* fiction—and I'm proud to be a Friend of the Prometheus Awards (for information, write 626 S. Meldrum, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521). In fact, my commitment to good libertarian science fiction is the precise reason I wrote the *Alongside Night* review that, apparently, has Schulman throwing tantrums.

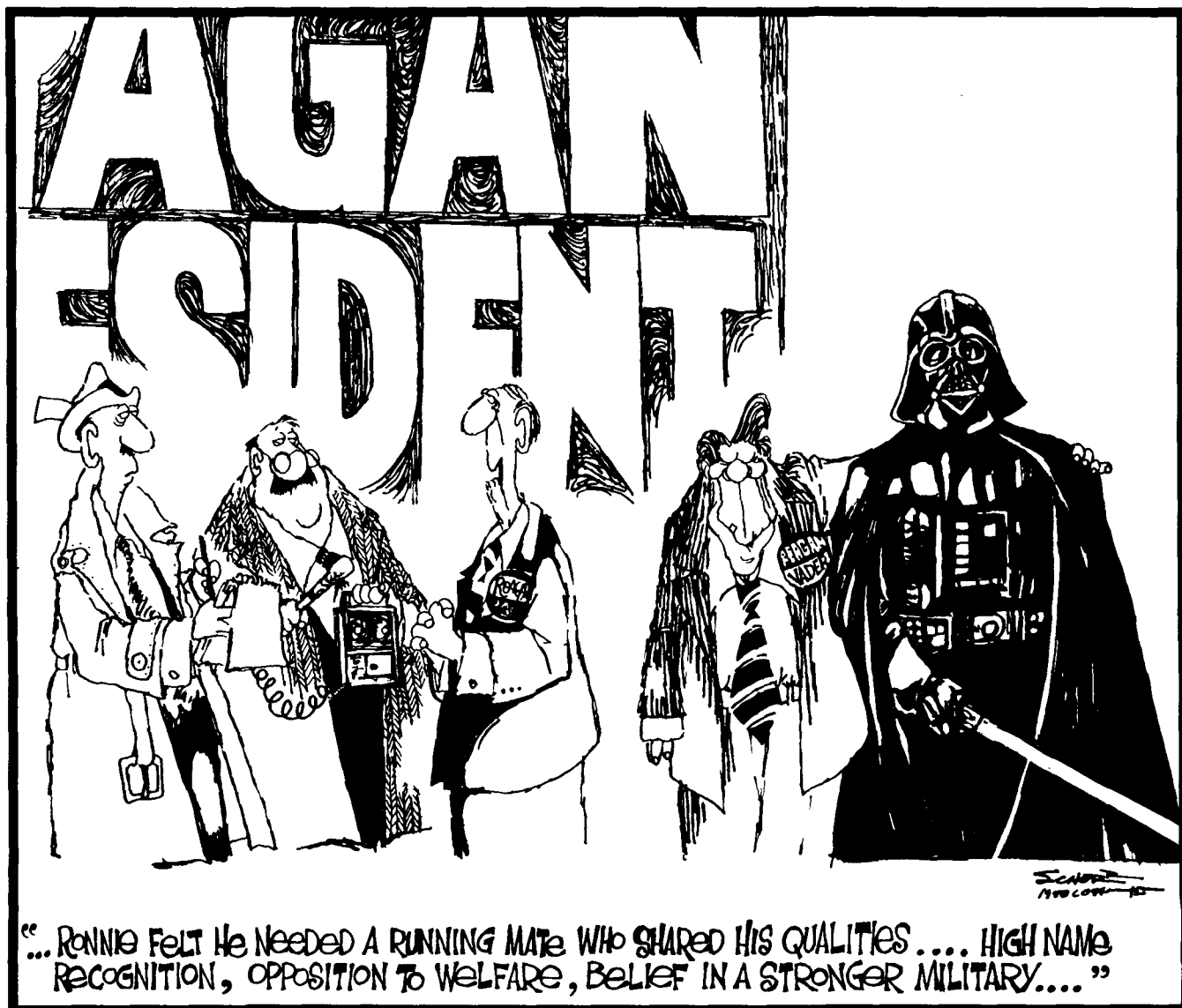
Unlike Schulman, I am not impressed by the false authoritarianism of "literary credentials." Instead, I choose to rely on my own independent thinking and honest feeling—and I urge all libertarians to do likewise.

If Schulman won't heed my view that credible characterization is indispensable to almost all good fiction, maybe he'll listen to one of

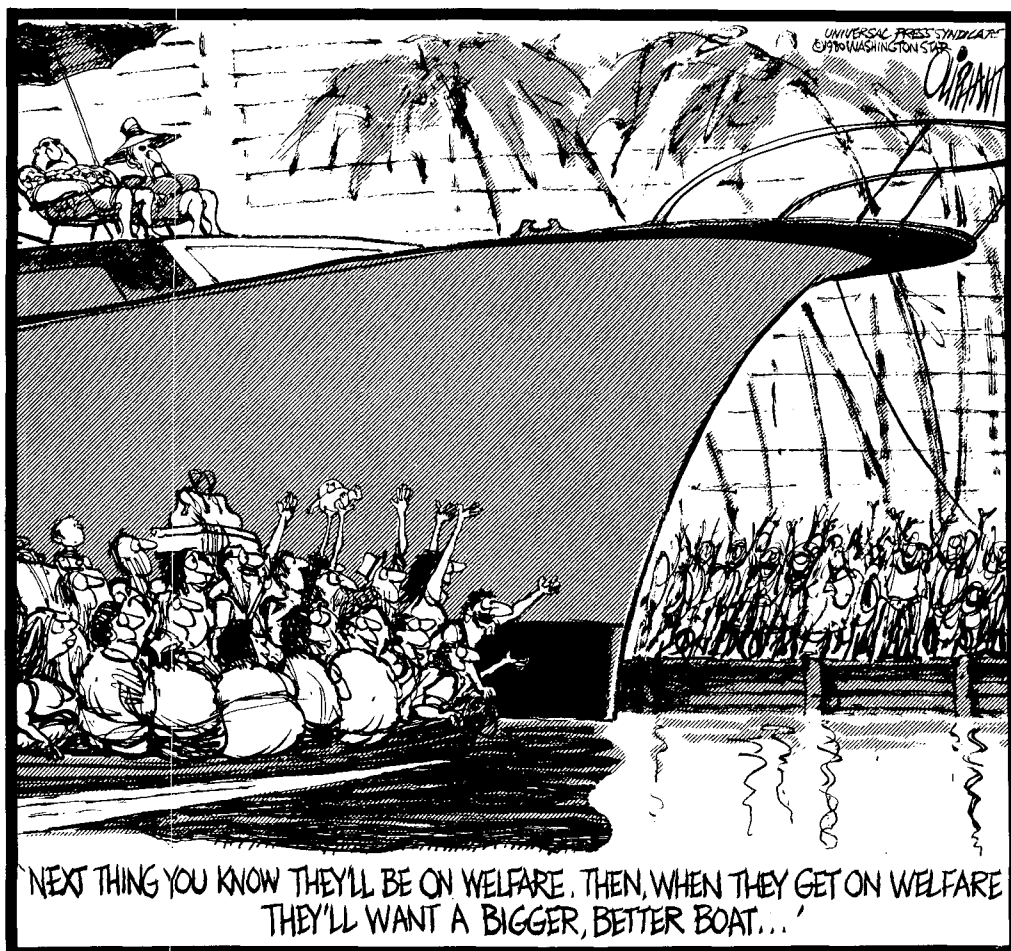
the best short fiction writers of this century: Theodore Sturgeon. In *Libertarian Review* (July, 1975), Sturgeon explained his standards as a literary critic: "I demand that [science fiction] be good fiction, and that means people. People interacting with people, ideas interacting with people. Anything else is tract, and while I have no objections to tracts and manuals, I will not have them misrepresented as fiction."

My review stands, and I stand with it. ☐

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# LIBERTARIANS



## Viva "scum"

WHEN THE 10,000 Cubans who had sought asylum inside the Peruvian Embassy in Havana were finally given permission to emigrate in late April, Fidel Castro became the face that launched a thousand ships. An amazing private flotilla set sail from Florida, funded by many of the 750,000 Cubans who had abandoned the island workers-paradise since 1959. Though many of the boats were owned by Cuban-Americans, others were operated by so-called profiteers who quite rightfully charged high fees for a hazardous rescue which risked their own lives and vessels in rough seas. They have been accused of overloading their craft in order to make more money, but in fact the boats were overloaded by order of Cuban authorities trying to rid themselves faster of dissident

"scum."

Our own dear President Carter, meanwhile, apparently in need of a new pretext for appearing indecisive, alternately welcomed the Cubans with "open arms and hearts," and threatened the boat operators with seizure, and with fines high enough to surpass their rescue fees. But for a while, even after Carter demanded an "orderly" (i.e. government directed) air and sea lift, Cuban authorities refused to cooperate, and the private effort continued. In an amazing show of organization and self-responsibility, American Cubans donated living quarters, jobs, tons of food and clothing and millions of dollars; and private agencies began reuniting refugees with long-lost families. In fact, it wasn't until the U.S. Immigration authorities took over the processing of the refugees that things began to bog down.

The media fretted over rumors about Cuban hos-

pitals and prisons being opened and Castro dumping his human "refuse" upon the U.S., but the incidence of disease among the refugees was, according to *Newsweek*, "lower than for the U.S. public as a whole." And, in fact, out of the 112,000 Cubans who have entered the country in the past six months, only 700 have criminal pasts. Many refugees stated when interviewed that their so-called criminal records were for the crime of "dangerousness"—a lack of sympathy with revolutionary goals or anti-social conduct.

On May 18, in order to counteract the loss of face caused by the defections, and to protest such U.S. actions as occupation of the Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, continued spy flights over Cuba, and the economic embargo, an estimated one million demonstrators marched past the U.S. interests compound in Havana. Although some of the demonstrators