

Editorial

Justice, not vengeance

The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution assert the supremacy of natural law—the self-evidence that all men are created equal with God-given fundamental rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This same principle was upheld in the Nuremberg Trials after World War II where following the orders of a superior or adhering to established procedures could not be offered as a justification for committing an atrocity.

Thus positive law, the rules and procedures in a law court, must bend before the imperatives of God's law. In these terms, there are circumstances of just war, or legitimate self-defense, in which an individual may take the life of another. Vengeance is never such a circumstance.

(While capital punishment has been justified on the basis that it deters murder, experience does not prove this to be the case.)

Recently there has been a growing spirit of blind vengeance, evidenced in the popular outcry for extending capital punishment to cover more crimes, and in the growing climate of acceptability for vigilante justice. To propitiate this mood, politicians vie to pass more and more draconian crime bills, and the courts ride roughshod over the rights of the accused. A terrible instance of this occurred in the Commonwealth of Virginia on Jan. 24, when a man was executed despite the fact that the judge asked to stay the execution expressed the belief in court that the man had not received a fair trial.

On Jan. 23, a last-minute appeal by death row inmate Dana Ray Edmonds was rejected by U.S. District Judge James C. Turk. At issue was the fact that Edmonds's attorney also represented a chief witness against him at the time of his trial. Turk ruled that he did not have the authority to stay the execution for procedural reasons. Thus he allowed positive law—rules and procedures—to supersede natural law. No doubt he was also influenced by the popular clamor since, just two days before, he had said, "It's not right to put someone to death who didn't have effective counsel by saying it's procedurally barred. I've got to do

some praying over this."

When justice is flouted in this way by the courts, people believe it is acceptable to take whatever they think is justice into their own hands, even to meting out the death penalty. We have seen several tragic instances of this, such as the recent shootings at abortion clinics, or potentially tragic incidents where people have shot into the White House.

Admittedly some of the shooters have clearly been demented (as in the case of the clinic killings and perhaps some of the recent attacks on the White House), but that is not the whole story. *EIR* has documented the direct involvement of British secret intelligence in the assassinations of American Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy and the attacks on President Clinton. Thus, America's historic enemy, the European oligarchy, has worked to create the *climate* of disorder. The violence emerging from the ranks of the environmentalist movement has similar roots. While terrorist groups such as Earth First! formally keep their distance from more respectable environmentalists, they are paid by channels set up by Prince Philip's World Wide Fund for Nature.

In the December issue of the *Earth First! Journal*, Mike Roselle, who heads the group, called for an escalation of terror. "We don't care who is in power in Washington," he wrote, "for whoever stands on the walls of Babylon will be a target for our arrows. When we raze the citadel, it will matter not who holds the keys to the corporate washroom, or who has reserved parking at National Airport, because we will be out trashing their limos and doing donuts on the greens of their racist country clubs. What we want is nothing short of a revolution."

Martin Luther King was well aware of the danger of raising the threshold for violence when he led the civil rights movement of the 1960s. His movement succeeded because it was built upon the principle of *agapē*, God's love for man, which cherishes the sanctity of all human life, and offers compassion in place of vengeance. Until this principle rules in public life, the future of the republic is in grave jeopardy.