

can at least go to the pubkeeper with a pile of photos and ask, 'Was this the lad?'

Tricks are tried by both sides. An Irish kid will stand on one end of a plank while another pulls up the other end and lets go, making a crack like a gunshot. "The idea is to panic us into firing first," Corporal Hazard explains. Street corners have been whitewashed to head height to give the gunmen a chance to draw a bead on troops as they slink by at night.

In the daytime, with kids playing in the streets, women wheeling prams, and the unemployed hanging around on the front steps of the pubs, the troops on patrol are cursed and threatened. Sometimes there are even deadly little ambushes. If the soldiers see the women and kids suddenly moving indoors, that means a gunman is in the area and ready to shoot. Sometimes the women suddenly bunch up and cut off the last man in a foot patrol, and before he can push his way through to his mates, someone from an upstairs window takes a shot at him. After the first few IRA rounds have been fired, the mothers may suddenly send all their kids back out onto the street, blocking any counterfire.

"It's really sick the way they use their kids," says one officer. "I sometimes think my son's going to be up here twenty years from now, just to deal with these little ones when they're grown up. What a miserable thought."

Any soldier who stands out from the rest gets a pile of Irish abuse heaped on his shoulders. Life is especially rough for a black wearing British Army combat clothes. Quite a few West Indians serve the Queen, and the very softest of the taunts they take are remarks like "Go home, Sambo, before we melt you down for rubber bullets."

"I just blow them kisses in return," says Pvt. Errol Geohagen from Barbados. "It really burns them up. When they ask me why I'm working for the white man, I just tell them to sort out their own problems first before they start worrying about mine. I don't mind all that verbal crap, really. All I know is that the girls who come over to our disco seem to dig me all right."

The lads hunched in the pig don't hate the Catholics, just the gunmen. They're just as worried about the "Prods," who are becoming increasingly belligerent. "After all," explains Corporal Hazard, "of the one hundred thousand registered guns in Ulster, the Prods own eighty-five thousand. If they decide to take us on, or take on the Catholics over our heads, all the shit we've been going through so far is going to seem like a Sunday school picnic." □

The Price of a Life

BY REGINALD L. WHITE

Recently we read in the San Francisco Chronicle a letter to the editor that we felt merited the attention of SR's readers. A slightly edited version of the letter is reprinted below, along with an autobiographical note we received from its British-born author.—Editors.

What is human life worth? Dr. Leonard Sagan of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic [Aug. 22] says \$300,000, but Mr. Robert Roth [Sept. 4] says life is priceless. By what means, Roth asks, can we compensate the dead?

Surely the question is: Whose life? And surely the answer depends on his politics—which side he's on. In 1967 we paid \$33 for each Vietnamese child killed in an accidental bombing, but we got \$100,000 from the Israelis for each American killed when the intelligence ship *Liberty* was torpedoed.

So there's a scale. One American is worth about 3,000 friendly Asians. In fact, the only time life doesn't come dirt cheap in the East (in our book) is when we're hell-bent to destroy it. Then we'll pay till it hurts—to kill. Again, in 1967, the cost of killing an enemy Asian was estimated at \$300,000, a neat coincidence with Dr. Sagan's computation. [Sagan's figure is an estimate of the value of productive labor lost to society when a person dies.] And after five more years of inflation and intensifying bombing the price of a dead VC has doubtless gone up steeply, along with the toll of Asian soldiers and civilians on both sides, though we are now down to a mere handful of U.S. casualties. This is called winding down the war.

As a high school dropout, I was engaged more or less in a war that brought down the British Empire and bled Europe white. The British Army sustained 240,000 casualties at Passchendaele; 420,000 on the Somme—57,450 of these on a single day, July 1, 1916. At Cambrai, between December 4 and 7, 1917, Haig lost 43,000, including 6,000 prisoners.

A puny sixteen-year-old, five-foot-two, and still afraid of wetting the bed, I played an unheroic part, of course. My skin was saved by my becoming a POW, one of the lucky few.

Reginald L. White is a retired educator who came to America in 1928 and now lives in Muir Beach, California.

As a prisoner, I brooded about the imbecility of it all (everyone should read Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*), thought that I'd never get home again, but that, if I did, I'd be as happy as a king just to be alive and home. Of course, when I got home, I was as depressed as hell—habit. Fortunately, the armies of those days were primitive machines, comparatively. They didn't try to play God with returned POWs and "restore their philosophy."

A personal "philosophy" is not something that comes through briefing or psychiatry, but what experiences do to your head. In 1914–18 I learned to be lazy (army routine does that), to see war as tragic and absurd, death as imminent, life as paramount: the mere fact of being alive and sentient as more important than anything else—except wanting the same for other people and maybe seeing the funny side, if any. Nothing else matters—not possessions, not winning games, not money, not power, not even "face." When a good European (most are elderly now) shrugs his shoulders, this is what he means. □

Hobo Hoedown

BY DAN CARLINSKY

BRITT, Iowa—Three yearly gatherings of note were held this past summer: the Democratic National Convention, in Miami Beach; the Republican National Convention, also in Miami Beach; and the National Hobo Convention, here in Britt. Since the Republicans and the Democrats chose not to invite me to their shindigs, I invited myself to visit the hobos.

The 'bos first convened in Britt, so we are told, in 1900. Thirty-three years later the get-together was revived and became an annual event. To be precise, if not cynical, the hobos don't actually convene themselves; the convening is done for them by the Britt Chamber of Commerce, which supervises a carnival, a parade, election of the King and Queen of the Hobos, a mulligan-stew line, and lots of other activities—and also absorbs the occasional losses the whole thing brings about (one year the event lost \$4). The publicity, which is heavy in the Midwest, is good for Britt, they say.

Dan Carlinsky is a freelance writer who lives in New York. He is presently gathering material for a book about American hobos.

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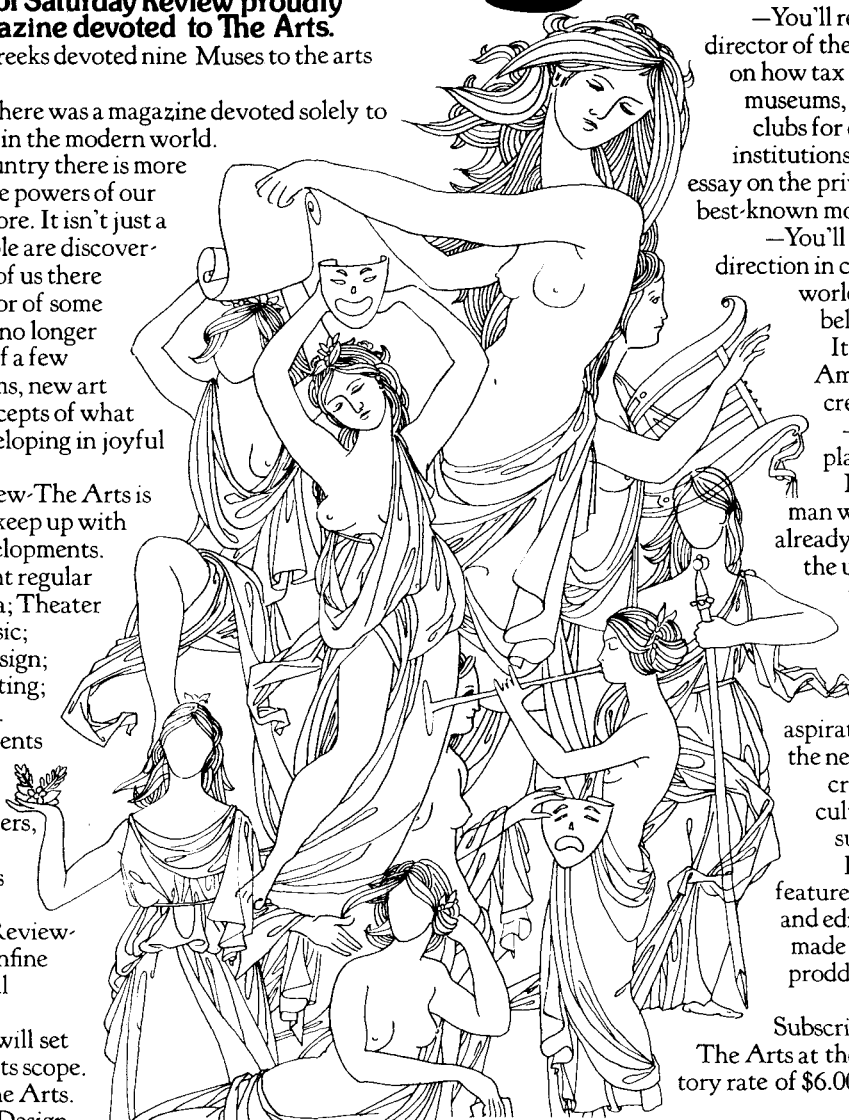
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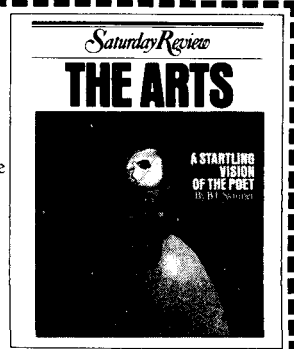
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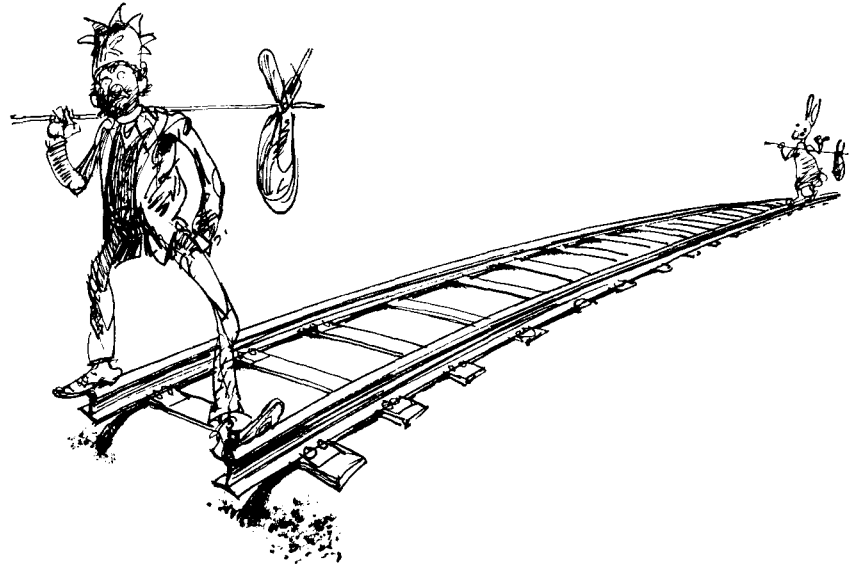
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Driving up from the Des Moines airport the evening before the convention, I was stopped a few miles before town by the crossing of a Rock Island Railroad train. I kept a sharp eye on the fifty-nine railroad cars of various shapes as they slid past; none bore so much as a hint of a hobo. I had heard that the convention wasn't what it used to be (years ago there were forty or fifty candidates for king; in 1971 there were six), but was I to attend the last rites?

Not if the Britt Chamber of Commerce had anything to say about it. The three-block business district along Main Avenue, which is State Route 111, was shut down and filled with rides and games for the kids and food for everyone. Makeshift benches in front of stores were filled with spectators; a ferris wheel called Rock-o-Plane was on Main Avenue in front of the public library; a merry-go-round was in front of the First State Bank; a trailer labeled "Carnival Office" had been set up just off the avenue. I walked the length of the midway, watching kids and adults munch snow cones, wallow in cotton candy, ride the Tilt-a-Whirl, enter the fun house, toss things, shoot things, grab things, win Teddy bears, and buy souvenir hobo key chains for 75 cents.

A kind townspeople informed me that several hobos had already been in town for a few days, taking advantage of Britt's annual hospitality (a \$7.50 grubstake per hobo), and that my best bet for finding early arrivals would be to go to the little refreshment stand around back through a nearby alley.

I followed the instructions and came

upon a big bull of a man with a denim shirt and jacket, a green cap, and a mean face. He was holding a can of Budweiser; it was not his first. "Are you a hobo?" I asked, pen poised.

His answer came in a bellow: "I am known as Lord Open Road, but my real name is James Harrison Langford Esquire the Third! How's that?" I had me a live one.

"I've been a hobo since March the ninth, nineteen hundred and twenty-seven, which happened to fall on a Wednesday, and I'm now fifty-two years of age. I went on the road due to conditions beyond my control. As the weak and free moral agent that I am, I must follow that command. I spend most of my time traveling in the western and southwestern parts of the United States, where the air is clean and I can get next to Mother Nature as her most ardent pupil and disciple. How's that?"

I assured him that was fine and asked him to tell me how he lived and where he slept.

"Anyhow, anywhere!" he boomed. "Right now I'm sleeping in the old city jail here, courtesy of the fine people of Britt, Iowa. Other American hobos here today are seeking shelter and lodging elsewhere: in the weeds, in abandoned cars, trucks, buildings, shacks, what have you. You have to learn step by step, program by program, routine by routine, like I did. There's an old saying that originated in Europe—or Europa, however you choose—that he who travels alone travels the farthest and the fastest. Next question!"

"How do you eat?" I asked.

"By having sufficient funds or mak-

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ing use of the institutions set up for indigent, traveling Americans like myself," he answered. "I think the Salvation Army tops 'em all. The Red Cross is so technical, y'know. They hate to issue a quarter, and they give you a stack of papers this high to sign. At the Salvation Army you can receive the things you need, maybe home-cooked meals. Then you must move out and make room for the next American. Family men can get some money there, but I'm just a transient. Family men are a higher echelon of society. Put that down. May I have your next question?"

"Where did you get the money for that beer?" I asked, trying to keep from sounding as if I were accusing him of stealing it.

"From the citizens and taxpayers of Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado, who graciously contributed."

I asked Lord Open Road if he was planning to stand for election.

"This is my sixteenth year of campaigning for king!" he yelled. "I've never won! The law of averages has gotta decide. A person can't keep losing year after year. It's up to the law of averages this time. How's that?"

He put a cigar into a plastic holder, lit it with a Zippo lighter, and continued.

"Us old-timers are a vanishing institution. The hippies, the scum, and the riffraff are taking over. There aren't seven real hobos left. How's that?"

I left Lord Open Road and sauntered over to a picnic table at which sat one authentic old man of the road and eight or ten college students, some in mock-hobo garb. The kids were from South Dakota State University and had come to the National Hobo Convention to publicize their *own* hobo affair, the school's homecoming, which regularly has a hobo motif and is called Hobo Day. "It's the biggest one-day event in the Dakotas," the Hobo Day chairman, a tall premed named Jim Higgins, told me.

The real hobo at the table, it turned out, was none other than Richard Wilson, whose moniker is the Pennsylvania Kid and who was the reigning King of the Hobos. He had a gray beard, three rings on his fingers, and dozens of buttons with various sayings pinned to his hat.

Wilson told me that he went on the road forty-eight years ago, riding in boxcars, hitching rides with cars, working here and there as a dishwasher. "I quit working after eight or ten years of washing dishes," he said, "because I could see no future in it." He grinned. "If you don't want anything, you can survive pretty good without working.

"You can't ride the trains the way you used to. You can't hardly be a real hobo today, just a highway hobo. Lots of winos and bums around, but I'm the last hobo. I just come from Omaha, Council Bluffs, Sioux City. I'll be in Britt till Wednesday. I haven't decided where I go next; I might catch a train to Albert Lea. But I wouldn't miss the convention; I'm always here for it."

It was getting dark. I stopped to see the camp area that several of the hobos had set up in a vacant lot behind the Goodyear Auto Service Center. A bonfire of scrap wood was burning; some dozen yards away the railroad tracks lay quiet. Two or three hobos and a handful of bystanders were there, chatting. A hoboish-looking man, wearing railroad overalls and sporting a neat, white goatee, told me that his name was John Lester, that he used no monicker, and that he'd "been out since 1928, when I went for a loaf of bread and jumped a freight and never came back." He also said that this was the first convention he had attended.

"Sure, hobos have been dying out," Lester told me, "but the past couple of years I've been seeing more of them out in the jungle, because people are out of work like in the Thirties. During the Depression you'd wake up and find whole families with babies in the boxcar with you. We may get that again. One out of twenty of us does it because we like it. Face it: The others have to. Black guys you don't see so much. They don't have to be on the road—they're on relief, getting the check.

"Tomorrow, after the election, I'll hitch to Minneapolis and then take a freight to the West Coast. I go wherever I can work a little bit. A lot of these guys here won't admit it, but we all do some work. I do furniture moving. If I go to Frisco, I got Frisco jeans. If I go to a furniture company, I got a green shirt and green pants like what they wear. You got to use the angles. The longest I've been in one place in the past seven years is one month. I head for New Orleans in the winter. It's great because you run into people you haven't seen in years. But it's getting harder. On branch lines, the feeder lines, you never know when the trains are going to run, and I'm getting too old to run after trains. The wheels are bigger, and the beds are too high these days. So I usually catch them down in the yards. It's getting tougher to get by the railroad bulls, too. They're watching out for crime.

"You can't even knock on people's doors anymore and offer to mow a lawn or carry the ashes. Today they call the police if you knock on their door. For sleeping I prefer the weeds—who

wants to go to bed in a seedy hotel?"

That reminded me that I had ten miles to drive to my own sleeping place for the night (the only motel in Britt was full of tourists who had come to see the hobos), so I left.

Early next morning I returned to downtown Britt. It was not yet 8 a.m., but townspeople were up and around and some visitors were ambling through the still-shut rides and booths. The first figure I recognized was the denim bulk of Lord Open Road. He hailed me from across the street and asked me to join him for a cup of coffee at an outdoor, sit-down booth.

"I got drunker than a skunk last night," he informed me in his usual bellow, punctuated by self-conscious laughs. "I went over to the dance at the Legion Hall and tried to dance with a teen-ager. I made a fool of myself and threw my hip out and went to bed. . . . I'll have a short stack and sausage and coffee and grapefruit juice."

I noticed a bankbook in Lord Open Road's shirt pocket and inquired about it.

"This is from the Columbia Union National Bank in Kansas City, Missouri, a growing metropolis, or municipality. I just spent twenty-one days there visiting relatives, having social intercourse, and renewing old acquaintances. How's that?"

We finished breakfast. Lord Open Road paid his own tab, and I gratefully excused myself.

By 9:10 merry-go-round music was competing with rock music screaming from a speaker, and hobos and guests were wandering all over downtown getting ready for the parade, which was scheduled for 10. A new hobo hove into sight. Gray-haired, he was wearing a vest and an unashamedly promotional sandwich-board sign that read Hard Rock Kid. He told me that he had taken a freight from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and that a friend had driven him the last leg of the journey that morning so that he wouldn't miss the festivities. Hard Rock Kid was a thirty-year veteran of the road; he had been to many conventions in Britt. Like other hobos, he thought he belonged to an endangered species.

By now the crowd lining both sides of the parade route had grown to what must have been at least three or four times Britt's population of 2,400. I stepped inside a parked bus to see who was there, and a lady with glasses and a kerchief told me that she was from Shenandoah, Iowa, and that a tour group from Shenandoah came to the National Hobo Convention every year. "I've been three times, and every time

it's been a lot of fun," she said.

I then chatted briefly with three teen-aged boys from Elkader, who told me that Elkader was near Waterloo, more than 100 miles to the southwest, that they had pitched a tent in a rest area the night before, that they have carnivals all the time in Waterloo, and that they came to see the hobos.

Next to the judges' stand two young announcers from KLSS, an FM radio station in Mason City, were doing a live broadcast from the opened rear of a red Torino station wagon. While they waited for the Hobo Parade to start, the announcers interviewed a Chamber of Commerce man who told them that mulligan stew, which would be served free after the parade and election, was just good beef stew. It was cooked by the high school girls' basketball team, he said, and would be served by the volunteer firemen.

At 10:17 the parade—led by a police car with roof light flashing—started off. There were school bands, floats from all over the state, a few floats from out of state (including a 1912 Model T driven by the crew from SDSU), and a huge float with hobos sitting serenely around its perimeter. The Pennsylvania Kid yelled to the crowd, "Gonna vote for me?" Everyone cheered. Everyone, it seemed, liked seeing the hobos.

At 11:30, with the carnival sounds in the background, several hundred fans pressed into the municipal parking lot for the feature performance. There was an announcement of the awards for best floats (first prize for adult floats: First Lutheran Church; first prize for youth floats: Boy Scouts), a message from Sen. Harold E. Hughes ("Deeply regret that prior commitments prevent. . . ."), a greeting by Mayor Ray S. Baker ("Most warm welcome from the City of Britt. . . ."), and a selection by the national champion fiddler, who told everybody to buy his new recording.

Throughout these proceedings the hobo contestants had been slowly gathering and taking their seats on the stage of the Showmobile, which is a kind of band shell. Several TV film cameras were set up in front of the stage, and newspaper photographers were jockeying for positions. There were eleven entrants, who were given two minutes each for a campaign statement.

Iowa Blackie: ". . . freight train at fourteen, got hooked on riding. . . ."

Connecticut Slim: ". . . crown prince of the hobos . . . 1929 . . . this is a brotherhood; we're the only guys left."

Virginia Slim: ". . . forty-six states . . . a dying thing, but an honorable thing. . . ."

Sparky Smith: ". . . I'm all over, usually out west. . . ."

Big Town: ". . . born 1892, on the road since 1908 . . . very happy in the life I've lived. . . ."

John Lester: ". . . I've been out since 1928 . . . you gotta keep clean, so the businessman will say, 'At least he ain't drunk'. . . ."

Pennsylvania Kid: ". . . these other winos and bums around here. . . ."

Hard Rock Kid: ". . . one of the few bona fide hobos in the great United States . . . I'll work, a bum won't . . . I'm for peace and prosperity and no poverty; I'm opposed to acid, the fuzz, and no smoking. I want free transportation for all hobos, one good meal a day, and three months' vacation in Florida. . . ."

Steamtrain Maury: ". . . when I was a young man, I spent a lot of years on the road . . . paused long enough to raise a family . . . last four years I've been back on the road part-time . . . want to put memories and history of us in a book. . . ."

Slow Motion Shorty: ". . . thanks to police and mayor. . . ."

Lord Open Road: ". . . my full name is . . . known by friend and foe, in front of me, in back of me, regardless of nationality, in parts of Europe—or Europa, however you choose . . . as I walk into the hobo sunset of oblivion, I ask to be elected. . . ."

The voting was by applause only (no whistling, hooting, or shouting). After a runoff of the Pennsylvania Kid, the Hard Rock Kid, and Steamtrain Maury, the Hard Rock Kid was declared winner and King of the Hobos and then dressed in a tin crown and a blue robe with fur and sequins. A young-looking, nonhobo blonde with a teen-aged daughter was quickly re-elected honorary Queen of the Hobos, and she kissed Hard Rock for the cameras. Hard Rock told the press: "I'm the happiest hobo in the world. God bless youse all. . . ." He didn't tell them that he had been king before—in 1970, 1967, and 1965—and none of the reporters seemed to know.

Hard Rock signed autographs, posed for the press's Nikons and the tourists' Instamatics, sold eight-by-ten glossy portraits of himself for \$3 each, and wandered around accepting congratulations over and over again.

"Hey, Hard Rock! Will you be in Brookings?"

"Yeah, see you there."

"Hard Rock—are you coming back to Ames?"

"Next week."

"When will you be out our way in Wisconsin?"

"I don't know, but I'll be there." □

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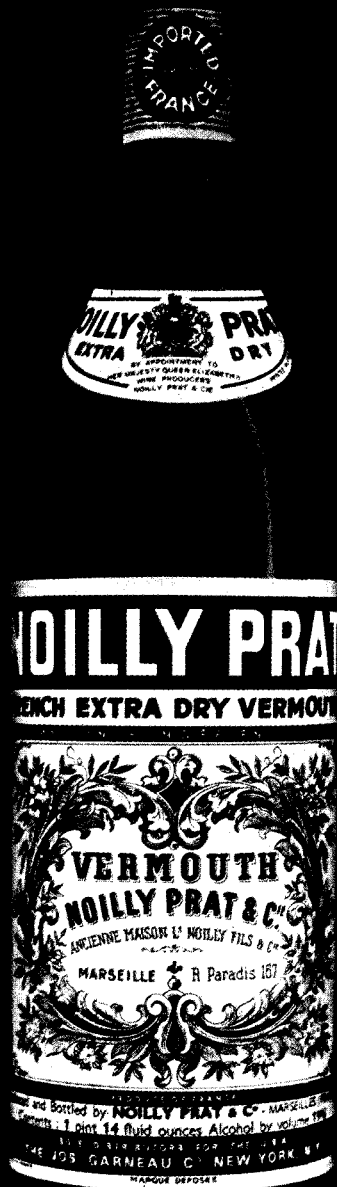


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"Points of View", 1958

Don't stir without Noilly Prat

Letters

Vietnam Revisited

Your special issue *The Consequences of the War* [SR, Nov. 18] was splendid. Not the least of its virtues was the fact that it gave Lord George-Brown ["A Victory for Alliance"] and Herman Kahn ["Four What-Ifs"] their chance to make an indecent exposure of their minds.

Like many other diplomats, Lord George-Brown seems to have lost all contact with reality. The United States violated a dozen treaties, agreements, and declarations of principle—some going back to World War I—and yet he can argue that we fought to honor our commitments. We imposed a corrupt and oppressive military dictatorship on South Vietnam—and he talks of a great victory for the freedom to establish freedom. We committed \$2,600,000,000 in an attempt to reimpose French colonialism, and we only stopped in 1954 because the French refused to fight on (as John Foster Dulles and Admiral Radford were eager to have them do, even if the price was American air power and atomic bombs)—yet Lord George-Brown writes that the old "imperialist powers" were excluded.

As for Herman Kahn, it should be enough to note that he refers to the present situation as "success"!

I should like, however, to suggest a fifth "What-If" to add to Kahn's collection of scenarios: What would have happened if we had kept our word and honored the 1954 Geneva Accords, as Eisenhower promised we would do? What if, instead of immediately violating the five major provisions of that agreement, we had allowed plans to be made in 1955 for the election that had been promised for 1956 and had allowed the future of Vietnam to be decided by a general election, held with secret ballots under international supervision? Ho Chi Minh almost certainly would have won, as Eisenhower testified. He would have united the country under a government that would have been far from perfect but immeasurably superior to the one that we have imposed. Vietnam would now be better off by over one million lives, over one million homes, and all the millions of acres we have reduced to barren wasteland. We would have saved \$400,000,000,000 and fifty thousand lives—and our honor.

William Palmer Taylor
Hamilton, Ohio

In "Who Really Died in Vietnam?" Leslie Fiedler states that our "deep-seated hatred for nonwhites may finally have been the reason why we were able to drop the atomic bomb on the Japanese, though not on the Germans. . . ." Had Fiedler bothered to do even the most basic research, he would have discovered that Germany surrendered in May 1945 and

that the first atomic bomb, as opposed to the static test device, was not ready until that July.

Terry W. Jackson
San Francisco, Calif.

Frankly, I have not been one of the most articulate of an older group of SR readers, with respect to the new magazine(s), finding the format distracting and the cartoons something of a *Mad* magazine reject quality.

Nevertheless, your issue *The Consequences of the War* is superb, outstanding, excellent, and whatever other admirable superlatives you may prefer. It alone vindicates and redeems all the other issues that left me less than enchanted.

My most sincere congratulations on a masterpiece.

A. W. Edwards
Laredo Times
Laredo, Tex.

In case you did not see the results, McGovern, a one-issue candidate, lost the election totally.

Among other conclusions, it can be inferred that a record number of American citizens support the President and our military staffs in their handling of the Vietnam War and are not the least bit interested in what McGovern has to say, and even less interested in what *The Society* is shouting.

Michael P. Beere
Timonium, Md.

Thank you for the issue on Vietnam. It was excellent.

James M. Gavin
Cambridge, Mass.

The special issue of *The Society* is one of the most fascinating pieces of fact-laced-fiction-à-la-opinion that I have ever read. It is enigmatic enough to prick thinking. Only Leslie Fiedler seems to have lost contact with reality concerning the Vietnam conflict.

Thanks for a great issue!

Phillip J. Woodworth
Mackinaw Christian Church
Mackinaw, Ill.

What makes you think your readers want to receive an entire issue devoted to the Vietnam War? I certainly do not, and everyone I speak to is sick to death of even hearing the word "Vietnam." It's not just closing one's mind to unpleasantness; it's that we've heard nothing but this over and over until there is nothing more to say. Your articles were just a rehashing of what has been said before.

David M. Price
New York, N.Y.

The Doomsday Syndrome

Let me mention just two of the more blatant errors in John Maddox's arguments [SR, Oct. 21]. He cites the increase in the rate of food production that has occurred in the last few years, outstripping population growth, and he concludes that warnings of global famine are unrealistic because there is no reason "to believe that the green revolution will slow down in the coming years." There is every reason to believe that it *must* slow down: the world has finite resources of arable land, and each acre has finite capacity, especially if overloaded with fertilizers as required by the high-yield crops.

A second example of Maddox's inaccuracy is his accusation that Paul Ehrlich makes a "bland assumption" that the social forces that have slowed down population growth in the developed countries will not work in the rest of the world. Unfortunately, this is no bland assumption but tragically likely to be the case. A physicist like Maddox should understand that, when initial conditions are very different, the same forces can result in qualitatively different behavior. The underdeveloped countries are starting from a base population with a huge proportion of young people. So, even if their birthrates were to drop precipitously, their total populations would almost certainly double before stability is reached; moreover, the birthrates will drop very slowly if they follow the pattern of the developed countries. The simplest analysis of the time scales of population growth versus those of social change and industrialization shows that the "doomsayers" (as Maddox calls the environmentalists) would find it difficult to exaggerate the urgency of their cause.

Beatrice M. Tinsley, Ph.D.
Richardson, Tex.

Air Piracy

I thought that Robert Meyers's piece ["Stopping the Hijacker," SR, Oct. 21] was quite worthwhile from the standpoint of spotlighting the enormous dimensions of the airport security problem. However, it contained an erroneous assumption concerning the federal government's future role in hijack prevention, which needs to be clarified. Contrary to the thrust of the article, the federal government has not the slightest intention of abdicating its responsibilities.

The departments of Transportation, Justice, State, Defense, and others will continue their respective and cooperative efforts in the antihijacking program as long as air piracies continue.

J. H. Shaffer
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Department of Transportation
Washington, D.C.