

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Where Do Wars Come From?

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER's article, "Can We Control the War in Vietnam?" [SR, Sept. 17], is undoubtedly meant as a critique of the administration's handling of the Vietnam War but it is, as a matter of fact, grease which can be used to ease the administration off the hook.

In his survey of the major American wars, four out of eight were said to be the result of "chance." The Vietnamese War is put in this category. It began "quite fortuitously . . . and developed into a major [war]." This, of course, is what the administration has been saying all along: We did nothing to bring it about nor have we caused its continuation. [But] either this war and all the wars are the responsibility of men and thus legitimately open to criticism and susceptible to the actions of men, or else they are the result of fortuitous events, chance, and bad luck, and thus immune from human responsibility. This latter line of thinking can only mean that history makes men, rather than the other way around, and that human action is meaningless.

Certainly, Professor Commager, somebody exercises some control, or is the expression of your views intended solely as an exercise in futility?

GEORGE D. BEAM,
Department of Political Science,
University of Illinois
at Chicago Circle.
Chicago, Ill.

PROFESSOR COMMAGER took a good deal of space to make two points: The United States has bumbled into most of its wars because of events controlling men, and yet no conflict is "irrepressible," as Seward called the Civil War, and men should have the good sense to avoid them. Which is to say, in Mr. Commager's view, American foreign policy-makers historically have been a bunch of bumbling idiots, and arrogant to boot.

It is not very perceptive to think American policy-makers feel they have the power to control events. The best they can and do hope for is to influence them.

EUGENE L. MEYER,
Philadelphia, Pa.

THE ARTICLE by Professor Commager provided a timely warning of the danger of accidental war with China inherent in our present foreign policy. Being in the right seldom prevents accidents. If a car is in the wrong lane we don't protest that we have the right of way; we attempt to avoid a collision. Although we may be in the right in South Vietnam, we appear to be making no effort to avoid a collision with China.

R. D. WILMOT,
Fullerton, Calif.

An Installment Paid

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS my profound gratitude for the article by Benjamin Quarles entitled "What the Historian Owes



"It all began during the airline strike."

the Negro" [SR, Sept. 3]. The valid and clear points stressed by Professor Quarles can also be greatly substantiated by Alexis de Tocqueville's analogy of "The Three Races" from *Democracy in America*, chapter eighteen.

CLEE SNIPE, JR.
New York, N.Y.

Whose Squiggles These Are

I'VE FIGURED OUT one of your recipes. You mix Cousins, Hicks, Sutton, and Capouya, stir with other rare earths, mull with Rex-roth, catalyze with humor, and muddle well with Lear and Kolodin. Distill over a blazing Ciardi and you get those marvelous little mythogenous cuts labeled with what looks like a couple of bacilli fleeing an enraged angletworm. Right? Or is that somebody's name?

LEE STAVENHAGEN,
Department of Germanics,
Rice University.
Houston, Tex.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The drawings to which Mr. Stavenhagen probably refers are those of Vic Volk, an artist whose work appears regularly in many magazines.*

Even Score

JOHN CIARDI'S MANNER OF SPEAKING, on September 17, was superb, and should be required reading for teachers as well as students. As a fulltime teacher and moonlighting writer myself, I have never given students an assignment of writing to writers; instead, I ask them to make their own

definitions of a poet's definition by reading all that is available of that poet's work.

LILLIE D. CHAFFIN,
Meta, Ky.

THE MANIFESTO by John Ciardi, "No Subject" [MANNER OF SPEAKING, Aug. 27], is one of the best defenses for outlines that I have ever read.

Mr. Ciardi does little to justify his abhorrence of outlines except to pronounce, with the finality of Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum*, what he considers to be a self-evident truth, i.e., that "... no writer worth the pages he spoils can know what he is going to write until he sees what he has written." The edict is impressive, but hardly convincing, and it is inaccurate if we accept William Wordsworth's account of his creative process.

C. MILLER,
Portland, Ore.

More Label Lore

MR. STUART DUNCAN OF Lea and Perrins neglected to remind TRADE WINDS [Sept. 10] that their label used to affirm in finest British eloquence: "Possessing a peculiar piquancy and from the superiority of its zest is more generally acceptable than any other sauce."

I quote from memory because this declaration provided the name by which the sauce was known in our family. Many a guest was startled when my father asked, across the dinner table: "May I trouble you for the peculiar piquancy?"

E. ROSS JENNEY,
New York, N.Y.



Should you trust a travel agent?

If you're going to Europe, some of your friends have been to places you haven't. Ask them for advice. Or read magazine articles. That's what a lot of people do. And they have a good time.

And they never know what they're missing.

What these travelers may not realize is that travel agents, travel, too. Some go to Europe as often as five times a year. And some of a travel agent's best friends are concierges of

very popular hotels. And some of a travel agent's best hotels are unknown. And a find. Which makes travel agents pretty sophisticated travelers.

He's the man, we think, you should ask about Air-India. Ask him whether Air-India flies Boeing 707 jets to London and the Continent? Whether Air-India pilots meet rigorous international requirements? Ask him whether the service is gracious?

Since Air-India reservations cost no more if a travel agent makes them, frankly, we'd like to hear from him and see you.

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The airline that treats you like a maharajah.
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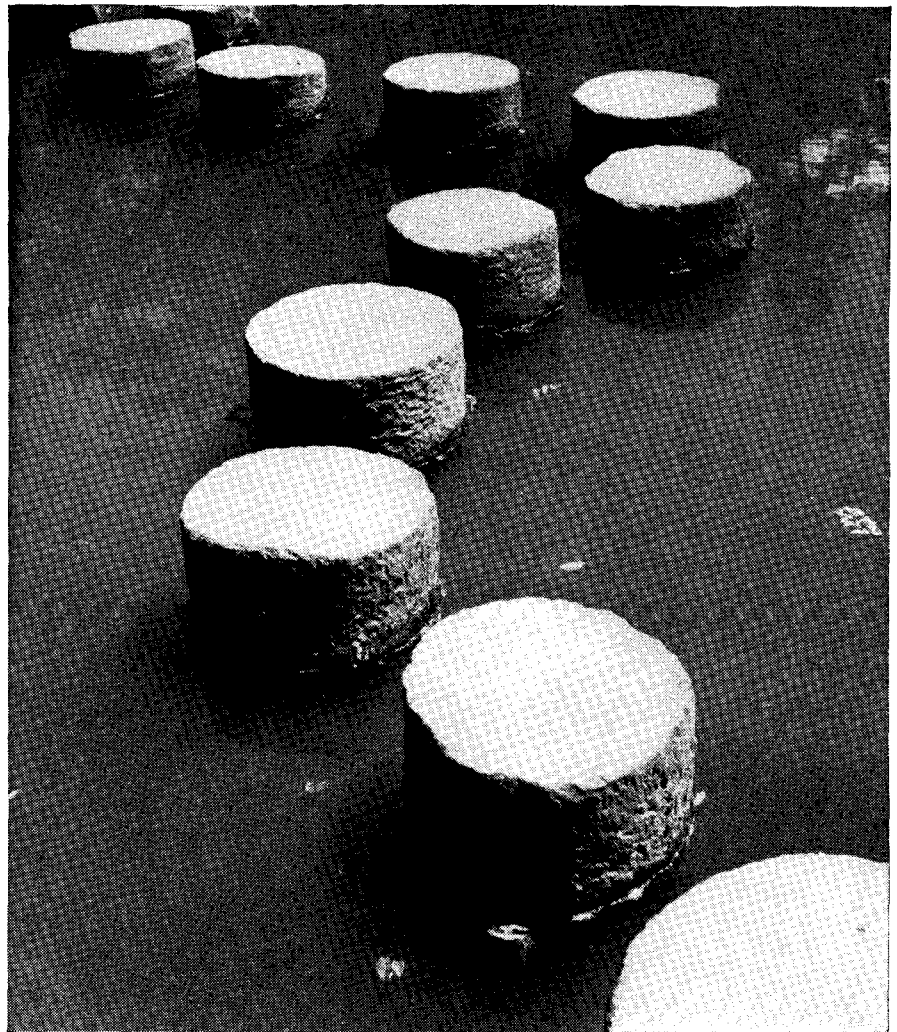
AMERICA AS A PACIFIC NATION

THE INFLUENCE

THE INVOLVEMENT

THE NEIGHBORS

THE LEGACY



—Werner Bischof (Magnum).

IT WAS SPRING and we were in Paris, my friend and I, both of us fathers of little girls. From our table high on the Champs the view stretched downhill past the Rond Point, past the Place de la Concorde and through the Petit Carrousel, a route that took it through all the France of all the yesterdays I had learned about as a child. The vista seethed with the air of all the French lessons that had been drilled into my skull, for wasn't French culture and manner, language and