

# Letters to the Editor

## Diagnosing Cities' Ills

I READ WITH interest Gus Tyler's "Can Anyone Run a City?" [SR, Nov. 8], but found his assumptions about causes of city problems totally unconvincing and his proposed solutions shortsighted and naïve.

Mr. Tyler claims that the "universal malady" of cities is density. Density in cities is not a disease. The disease is economic stagnation. And density is not a cause of economic stagnation. Furthermore, the assumption that creating new cities would get rid of old problems, such as overpopulation, too few jobs, too many automobiles, too little tax money, and too much debt, seems childlike in its expectation. What hope do we have that the old problems won't relocate themselves? How can we think new towns will be "dynamic"? Will "all those exciting ideas of city planners" flourish only in a utopia?

How can anyone justify spending billions or "a trillion" to start over when the only alternative that would leave would be to hope the problems wouldn't re-occur? (Of course, we could always build *newer* cities.) It would seem more sensible to spend our billions on removing the economic stagnation of our existing cities. I hope Tyler's thinking is not prophetic, for it is disappointing.

CONSTANCE M. GUTOWSKY,  
Sacramento, Calif.

ONCE UPON A TIME, "escape to the suburbs" was regarded by many as a solution to urban problems. "New cities" could easily follow the same course, particularly as the phrase is dangerously deceptive, suggesting that the new cities will be populated by a new people, who—unlike you and me—do not have the attitudes, desires, and habits that make our existing cities precisely what they are.

MARK HEYMAN,  
Long Beach, N.Y.

## Livingston/Haponski Exchange

REGARDING Lt. Col. William C. Haponski's "Reply to a Vietnam Veteran" [SR, Oct. 25] in answer to Dr. Gordon S. Livingston's "Letter from a Vietnam Veteran" [SR, Sept. 20]: Colonel Haponski immediately turned his article to the official civil affairs of the Eleventh Armored Cavalry Regiment, and ignored the unofficial, everyday aspect that Dr. Livingston emphasized. The official projects of the Eleventh ACR are without doubt praiseworthy to the U.S. and beneficial to the South Vietnamese, but further considerations should be made.

I, along with other members of the First Cavalry Division (the squadrons of the Eleventh ACR in Quanloi, Binh Long Province, are under the operational control of the First Cavalry Division), have been required to initial a letter that dealt with the treatment of Vietnamese nationals. In part, the letter stated that hitting children

with C-rations thrown from the vehicles in a convoy should not be done. (The kids line the roads to beg for Cs and to give the peace sign. They beg *for* the C-rations, not to be hit by them.) Additionally, the letter abjured helicopter and fixed-winged aircraft pilots from buzzing Vietnamese civilians and ARVN troops along the roads. (Specific instances of violations, along with the injuries incurred, were given.) Lastly, the letter contained reports of shooting incidents in which Vietnamese children (eight to ten years old) were needlessly and inexplicably picked off by soldiers.

These are the incidents that sicken Americans such as Livingston. To oppose those actions described by Haponski, such as the building of schools and the supplying of medical treatment outside regular hours, is like opposing motherhood and apple pie. A man would have to be unnatural not to be moved by the plight of many Vietnamese. Colonel Patton's actions are laudable. He could have left the people to rely on their own nonexistent resources. But he and his ranking subordinates have the power and the mission to do such acts. That is his job and he does it. Livingston's objections were to things not classified as jobs or missions; they were objections to bullyish actions with

forethought and to horrible bunglings without forethought.

The fact that I and others like myself were required to indicate officially that we had read and understood the letter indicates that the problem does exist and exists to a degree that both explains and justifies Livingston's position. Haponski's reply was naïvely conceived and lopsidedly written.

SP/5 MICHAEL STANCAMPIANO,  
191st Military Intelligence Detachment,  
First Cavalry Division.

## D.C. Defense

AS A PROUD Washingtonian, I resent David Butwin's condescending remarks in "But-ton-down Town" [BOOKED FOR TRAVEL, Nov. 8] about Washington's Southern sluggishness and behind-the-times clothing.

Mr. Butwin obviously failed to heed the words of his young friend Jay Friedlander that New York can't be compared with any other city. It is because Washington lacks the super-sophistication and rat-race pace of New York that many of us prefer to live here. Butwin has been guilty of careless journalism in drawing conclusions about Washington from a single and obviously short trip to our city, during which he visited only selected watering holes and walked only selected streets. Judging Washingtonians by a visit to Nathan's is like judging New Yorkers by a visit to Sardi's.

KARL NORDLING,  
Washington, D.C.



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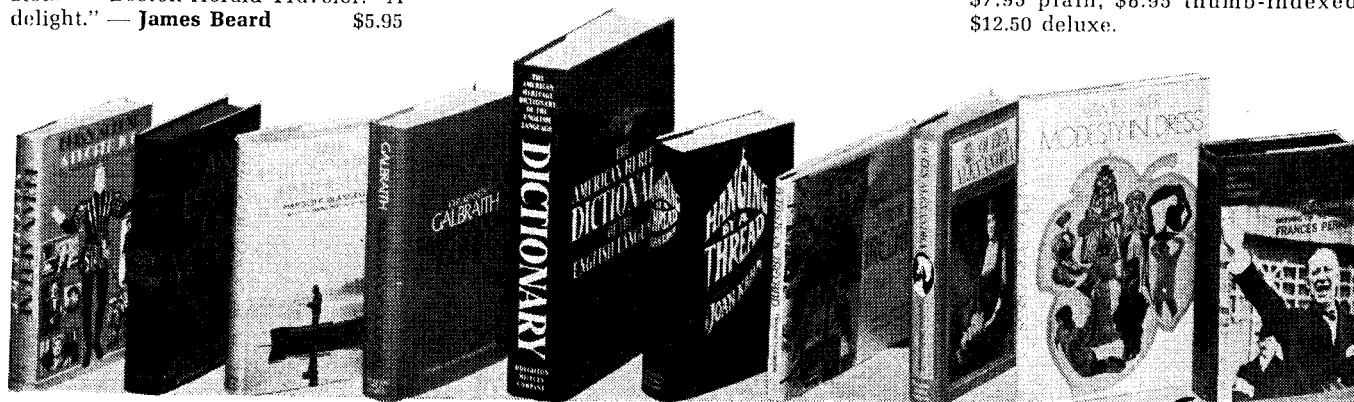
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An essay review of "Fire from Heaven," by Mary Renault  
(Pantheon, 374 pp., \$7.95)

## Alexander's Ascent to Greatness on a Ladder of Gore

by LIONEL CASSON

**T**hough men have always played the leading roles in Western history, women can generally be discerned operating in significant ways behind the scenes. There is one important exception: the glory that was Greece was fashioned almost entirely by men. Now, after almost twenty-five hundred years, the ladies have finally evened the score—this masculine world *par excellence* has been brought to life by a gifted female novelist, Mary Renault.

In ancient Greece the guests at a party, after draining their wine cups, would empty the lees into a bowl, and, on departing, toss the last drops on the ground to see what symbolic shapes they might form. For her first fictional evocation of Greece's past, Miss Renault chose the closing decades of the fifth century B.C., when the leading city-state, Athens, after drinking the exhilarating wine of achievement and renown, reached the bitter dregs of military and moral collapse. She titled her book, meaningfully, *The Last of the Wine*.

In 432 B.C. Athens was, as Pericles put it, "a school for all Greece." Its army was a match for any, its navy ruled the seas, it governed itself by a town council in which every citizen had an equal vote and voice, its theater was presenting the latest masterpieces of Sophocles and Euripides, Ictinus had completed the Parthenon and Phidias the famed statue of Athena housed there.

The following spring Athens embarked on the war against Sparta that, with a few short-lived intervals of truce, was to last twenty-seven years.

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LIONEL CASSON, professor of classics at New York University, is the author of *Masters of Ancient Comedy*, *Masterpieces of Classical Literature*, and other books on the literature and history of the ancient world.

The Athenians began it to maintain their grip upon an overseas empire, kept rekindling it through greed for expansion and thirst for revenge, and ended it only when their city was besieged and the sole alternative to surrender was starvation.

Miss Renault tells her story through the voice of a character named Alexias, an Athenian of good family and comfortable means who was born just as the curtain went up on the first act of this tragedy. Alexias spent ten years of his youth and early manhood under arms, in the beginning fighting for a mighty city of proud reputation, at the end fighting in a desperate civil war against thousands of his countrymen who had betrayed Athens's ideals.

Alexias is a fictional person, but Miss Renault has him rub shoulders with figures whose names are household words. He grows up with a boy called Xenophon, uncommonly adept at military exercises and particularly good with horses. (She allows herself one of her rare flashes of humor with Xenophon; when Alexias reports that he will soon have a baby brother or sister, Xenophon is quick with advice on how to train it: "at times it seemed he wanted me to bring it up as a Spartan; at others, as a horse"). Alexias gets to know a serious, dreamy-eyed boy whose powerful build earns him the nickname Plato ("Broad Shoulders"). He serves for a while under the brilliant but erratic and unscrupulous general Alcibiades.

Through all his formative years Alexias listens entranced to the street-corner chats of an oldish man with a satyr's face who tirelessly quizzes everyone he can buttonhole on their views about the proper way for men to behave. Socrates was to be the second most important influence on Alexias's life, after that of the man he was in love with. Greek males of the leisured class as often as not found the fulfillment of love only with each other. Perhaps it could not be otherwise, con-

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