

To return to Mr. Street, my main criticism of his book is that it does not even allude to certain larger perspectives in which he might have set his subject. For instance, there is the imperialist literature of America in the same period, from Cooper to Faulkner; there are the disguised forms of the imperialist sensibility, in the historical and the humorous novel; and, even within overtly imperialist British fiction, one needs to set the 1858-1920 period in temporal perspective. *Coral*

*Island*, for instance, borrows heavily from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and is in turn borrowed from by William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Those three books contain within them the history of the imperialist sentiment in England. To take another example, Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* repeats much of Defoe's *Captain Singleton*, and is repeated in modern inverted form by some of Paul Theroux's novels appearing today. For we are still brooding over that subject.

## Economists at Bay: Why the Experts Will Never Solve Your Problems

by Robert Lekachman

(McGraw Hill; 311 pp.; \$8.95)

Paul Heyne

"When one economist told an audience in passing that he wondered why anyone bothered to listen to economists any more, the *New York Times* featured the comment as the Quotation of the Day, an honor that the economist had never been granted for anything else he might have said that was a trifle more respectful to his colleagues' pretensions." Lekachman relates this story on page 4 and reveals in a footnote that he was the economist who made the comment, at a February, 1975, conference on full employment. There's nothing surprising about that; free-swinging criticism of a profession by one of its members is far more likely to make the news than praise or judicious criticism. It is also more likely to result in a marketable book. It is not likely, however, to induce self-critical reflection within the profession being attacked or to help the lay public evaluate the profession's contributions to public life.

The theme of this book, according to Lekachman, is that "standard economics" starts from a perspective which, "whatever once may have been its congruence to the realities of capitalism, now is outmoded by changes in behavior, economic institutions, and power relationships within domestic boundaries and among nations." For purposes of argument let us assume that his thesis is correct. The question then arises: Why do so many intelligent,

highly trained people continue to employ an obsolete perspective? It cannot be that they have encountered no criticism of their approach, since criticisms along the lines of Lekachman's are regularly published, read at professional meetings, discussed among graduate students, and even summarized in introductory textbooks.

Lekachman makes no real attempt to answer that question, despite the sixty-five pages in his chapter on "The Socialization of Economists." The reader emerges from the chapter knowing that Lekachman dislikes market capitalism, pretensions of value neutrality on the part of social scientists, inequalities in the distribution of income, Richard Nixon, esoteric exercises in analytic technique, the deification of gross national product, large business corporations, and "politics in a plutocracy." But the reader will find no answer to the crucial question: How has the socialization of economists prevented the vast majority of them from recognizing the distorting and limiting effects of thought within which they work?

But is Lekachman serious? Or is he merely capitalizing on the rule for success taught him by his experience with the *New York Times*? Would a responsible treatment of his theme wait until page 104 to inform the reader (and then only in a footnote) that the author has

## CHINA AS A MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

by Al Imfeld

The real Chinese revolution lies in the fact that this nation, with a population four times as large as the U.S., put agriculture before industrialization, turned inward to find identity and inspiration, and placed faith in the masses of its people rather than on social planners and savants. China's impressive accomplishments make her a point of reference for most of the one hundred other developing nations which can point to far less despite massive help from West and East. It is in this context that Imfeld quotes Maxwell's dictum that "China is more important to the world as an idea than as a place." As a consequence, this highly readable work by a priest-sociologist fills a real need.

*Al Imfeld, a Roman Catholic priest, is a member of the Bethlehem Fathers, a Swiss missionary society. He is Director of the Third World Information Service in Berne and edits two monthly journals. He holds graduate degrees from the Gregorian (theology), Fordham (sociology) and Northwestern (journalism).*

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"considerable sympathy" for the view of contemporary radicals that "mainstream economics [is] apologetics for market capitalism"? How likely is it that someone who begins with this view of economics will present an adequate critique of economists' practices? Will he even be familiar with what economists are actually doing today? Contrary to what Lekachman asserts in the last sentences of his introduction, discontent with one's discipline is not "entirely healthy." It sometimes produces a failure to understand one's own subject. After all, no one is likely to spend much time keeping up with developments in a discipline that he or she deems fundamentally misguided from the outset.

Some such explanation must be found for the many astonishing assertions in this book about what economists are currently doing and not doing. Lekachman speaks of "the persistent popularity of the Phillips curve in the writings of mainstream economists"; but the Phillips curve has been under a critical cloud for a decade now and was attacked even before that by the "Chicago" economists, whom Lekachman especially despises. He accuses economists of "taking for granted everything from the two-party system to corporate concentration of control, division between private and public activity, current profit margins, employer definition of job qualification, and the sanctity of existing distributions of income and wealth"; one does not have to go any farther than the annual meetings of the American Economic Association or the published *Papers and Proceedings* from these meetings to discover that critical research is in fact being done on each of the issues he mentions. He tells us that economists refuse to see that "efficient use of resources, steady economic growth, and consumer freedom are valuations"; but every economist of my acquaintance knows that they are valuations and that they sometimes conflict with other valuations. "It is sad," he tells us, that so few economists...are urgently engaged in developing better national policies for high employment"; all the evidence to the contrary from current books, professional journals, and popular publications will, of course, not refute Lekachman if, as his argument often suggests, the engagement only qualifies

as "urgent" when it produces policies of which Lekachman approves. Economists deny, according to Lekachman, that they have anything worth saying about the distribution of income and wealth or the measurement of economic welfare; there is in fact a huge and expanding body of writings by economists on each issue.

For a dozen pages he criticizes "the great god gross national product," as if economists were unaware of its limitations as a measure of welfare. Every one of his criticisms can be found in any good textbook discussion of the national income and product accounts. In the context of an attack on economists' assumptions of competition, he criticizes licensing procedures that masquerade as public protection but in fact serve as exclusionary schemes to restrict competition; but no group has been more vigorous or insistent in attacking licensing on just these grounds than the economics profession. "The real world constantly astonishes the adept economist," we are told. "Unemployment rises but inflation persists. Cartels refuse to disintegrate. Unions behave differently at different times in different places. Fiscal and monetary policies sometimes work, other times don't. Whole industries are puzzlingly sluggish in their responses to the clear sig-

nals from the market. Even altruism on occasion is a device more efficient than the market." If the adept economist is astonished by any of this, he doesn't read the professional journals. Economists "refuse to cope with unions as political organizations," Lekachman complains; that has not been true at least since economists began, over a quarter century ago, to develop political models of trade union behavior. American economists suffer from "the parochial inclination...to concentrate on the behavior of their own economy almost to the exclusion of international events"; that statement would be false even if we obligingly ignored the hundreds of American specialists in international economics.

There are a number of accurate observations about economists' behavior in this book. The professional journals are indeed, as Lekachman maintains, filled with matters of interest only to economists. But does anyone complain if medical journals are filled with matters of interest only to physicians? Lekachman fails to point out that many eminent economists *also* write and lecture for lay audiences. Fortunately, many of them have more respect for facts and fairness when they do so than Lekachman displays in *Economists at Bay*.

## Beyond Kissinger: Ways of Conservative Statecraft by George Liska

(Johns Hopkins; 159 pp.; \$12.00/\$2.95)

Albert F. Eldridge

The many books on Henry Kissinger in the last seven years fall generally into three categories, not mutually exclusive, sometimes overlapping, and often with unclear lines between them. First came a series of works by journalists who were trying to tell an avid American public something about the man who was becoming "second only to the President in foreign affairs." To describe these works as "journalistic" is not entirely pejorative; some were written by knowledgeable foreign policy analysts and were as careful as their

meager knowledge of Kissinger permitted. Others appear to have been rushed into print by persons whose acquaintance with policy or Kissinger was superficial and limited to a cursory reading of secondary sources.

The journalistic school of Kissinger analysis was quickly augmented by the polemicists. Picturing Kissinger as either hero or villain, this genre showed its bias in almost every page. Both ends of the political spectrum are represented in this category, and the "studies" that result serve chiefly as platforms for