

in which U.S. involvement in Vietnam developed are at least open to debate, and probably incorrect as given. One senses the author's need to drive every nail into the Vietnam coffin, to overwhelm the reader with a mountain of evidence of our failures. As a consequence, the writing is somewhat mechanical and uneven, as when the author moves on the same page from policy and strategy to squad tactics.

About a third of the book is given over to appendices (there are seven), a bibliography, notes, and an index. Three of the appendices are especially worthwhile: an exceptionally lucid statement, by an officer who spent many years in Vietnam, of what went wrong militarily; a memorandum by Lieutenant General William R. Peers on the My Lai affair, and an interesting essay by the author on the nature of Viet Cong operations. Whatever the book's inadequacies and whatever the credibility problems raised by the ambiguity of the author's identification, the argument remains valid and the book important. Cincinnatus's efforts are informed by a deep and genuine concern for the Army and its future.

Since we have no other Army, we must share that concern. The military forces of this country are accountable to you and me. A rendering of accounts on Vietnam is past due. Cincinnatus has begun the process. 

### **SOLVENCY: THE PRICE OF SURVIVAL**

by **James Chace**

(Random House, 110 pp., \$9.95)

*Richard John Neuhaus*

A few years ago Mr. Chace, managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, gave us *A World Elsewhere*, a modest little book that helped explain what Henry Kissinger was up to in building a "new" foreign policy. Things seemed to make better sense back then. Now Mr. Chace, apparently inspired by some seminars at the very conservative Lehrman Institute in New York, puts forward a view that is at once alarmist and strangely sanguine. "To rebuild America...or to accept gradual bankruptcy — these are the choices before us. But the political difficulties standing in the way of such rational choices are severe. It is hard indeed to imagine their being

# ALTERNATIVES

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### **VIETNAM WRAP-UP**

Reflection on this sad chapter of our national life continues. Fiction, documentary, and analysis are the modes of our reflection. James Webb, author of *Fields of Fire*, former combatant in Vietnam and now counsel to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, has published a new novel on the war, *A Sense of Honor* (Prentice-Hall, 324 pp., \$10.95). Mark Baker interviewed those who were there for *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There* (William Morrow, 324 pp., \$12.95); there is a glossary of soldier slang at the end. Daniel S. Papp, professor of international affairs at Georgia Institute of Technology and a former research professor at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, gives us *Vietnam: The View From Moscow, Peking, Washington* (McFarland and Co., 270 pp., \$17.95). Perceptions in the three capitals were, and it appears still are, distinct and different. Robert Klein's *Wounded Men, Broken Promises* (Macmillan, 278 pp., \$13.95) covers more than the aftermath of Vietnam; there are interviews with veterans from all our wars in this century, beginning with World War I.

made at all until a great crisis is upon us—which it is—and is perceived as such—which it is not." He returns several times to the parallels between the economic shape of the country and that of New York City several years ago. He mentions he has been talking with Felix Rohatyn, the mastermind of New York's "rescue" from bankruptcy.

The foreign policy crisis is very much a domestic economic crisis disrupting our international relations. Solvency is not only economic, to be sure. The title theme is borrowed from Walter Lippmann's "fundamental principle of a wise foreign policy": that a nation be solvent in the sense of bringing into balance, with "a comfortable surplus of power in reserve," its commitments—economic, political, military—and its power. Very much the villain in Chace's analysis is Lyndon Johnson and his Vietnam war—a classic and disastrous instance of throwing the nation into insolvency by spending beyond its means in a cause outside its interests.

Chace strikes a moderate tone in most things. He is, for example, a conventional economic conservative in believing that taxes must be increased to cover expenditures. Thus he does not deal with the "supply-side" orthodoxy new to our national budgeting with President Reagan, in which living and producing beyond our means results in the means to live. In this and other connections it is too bad Chace penned his essay at the end of the Carter era and has been able hurriedly to insert only a few references to the directions of the new administration. The resultant problem of tenses may leave the reader wondering just whom or what Chace is

Editor's Note

Humanitarian Diplomacy, by Tom J. Farer, reviewed in the May issue, was published by NYU Press.

Re "Constitution-Making in Canada," by Richard S. Kay (May). It was stated on page 22 that the constitutional amendment procedure proposed by the Trudeau government involves "a national referendum following approval of the amendment by six provinces." This should read: "The proposed amendment machinery permits a referendum on a constitutional amendment to be called by the federal government in the absence of provincial approval, as an alternate method of ratification." It is the possibility of dispensing with agreement by provincial governments that arouses some of the most vigorous opposition to the Trudeau plan.

criticizing. For instance, he is not happy with the global anti-Communist crusade that was U.S. foreign policy some time back. Neither is he happy with the more specifically targeted anti-Sovietism that has emerged since Afghanistan, since, he notes, many problem areas, such as Latin America, have little or nothing to do with the Soviet Union. The reader wondering about the debate over Nicaragua and El Salvador will find no help, indeed no mention of it, here.

Mr. Chace correctly urges that we order our interests in a more orderly way. That means our economic house and our relationships with allied houses. It means giving priority to the alliance with Western Europe and Japan rather than surrendering to obsessive anticommunism or anti-Sovietism. Reflecting on the nervousness of European leadership during the Carter presidency, Chace, in the best tradition of people who have thought seriously about international relations, urges us to prize rationality and predictability. He wishes there were more of both in the foreign policy of the nation which, despite its construction on "the windy scaffolding of credit," is still our best hope in an "increasingly anarchic world." It will no doubt be worth the wait for Mr. Chace's essay on the "new" foreign policy of the Reagan administration. **WV**

### INEQUALITY IN AN AGE OF DECLINE

by Paul Blumberg

(Oxford University Press; xv + 290 pp.; \$15.95)

William B. Neenan

This book falls into that pessimistic cluster that includes Robert Heilbroner's *Inquiry Into the Human Prospect*, Richard Barnett's *The Lean Years*, and Lester Thurow's *Zero-sum Society*. All provide a gloomy prognosis for the economy and society in the near and intermediate future. But these other books offer a more or less unified framework for analysis, while Blumberg's—though chock-full of data, survey results, and anecdotes—fails to come together in a compellingly coherent and significant tale.

Blumberg's viewpoint is certainly clear. The American economy has stag-

nated, and for the first time Americans are bearish about their prospects for the future. Those in the lowest strata of society are falling ever farther behind those above them. Only in the last chapter does Blumberg allude to any positive signs—an increase in tolerance, personal freedom, and political liberty in our society that he attributes to such factors as the continuing urbanization of America, the eradication of "the idiocy of rural life," and the increasing numbers who have received a college education.

I find this book basically unsatisfying. Take the question of "class," which is central to Blumberg's analysis. Nowhere does he carefully define it. His discussion ranges broadly, even indiscriminately, over income distribution, the "working class," and participation in high culture—attendance at dance, opera, and art events. But precisely what follows from this?

In the first two chapters Blumberg argues there has been no "class convergence" or reduction in "inequality" since World War II; and in the last chapter he concludes that during the 1970s the real income of the "lower strata" has actually fallen, relative to higher income groups. If he is simply indicating that from 1945 to the early 1970s all income classes shared more or less proportionately in the increased productivity of the American economy and that the ensuing inflation combined with little or no economic growth has reduced somewhat the relative position of the lowest income group, many observers would find this unexceptionable.

But clearly Blumberg has something more in mind: "The America we have always known is disappearing before our eyes." We are not merely experiencing a temporary period of economic hardship; "the stagnation of American capitalism may pull the props out from under the society's main belief system and provoke a crisis of meaning, purpose, and personal identity that will end in anomie and collective malaise."

In this scenario "class" cannot be simply a statistical group indicating, for example, the lowest or highest decile in an income distribution. Rather, "American class consciousness is genuine enough to manifest itself politically in virtually every election." Youngstown, in Mahoning County, Ohio, should offer a most favorable setting to test any hypothesis concerning the existence of