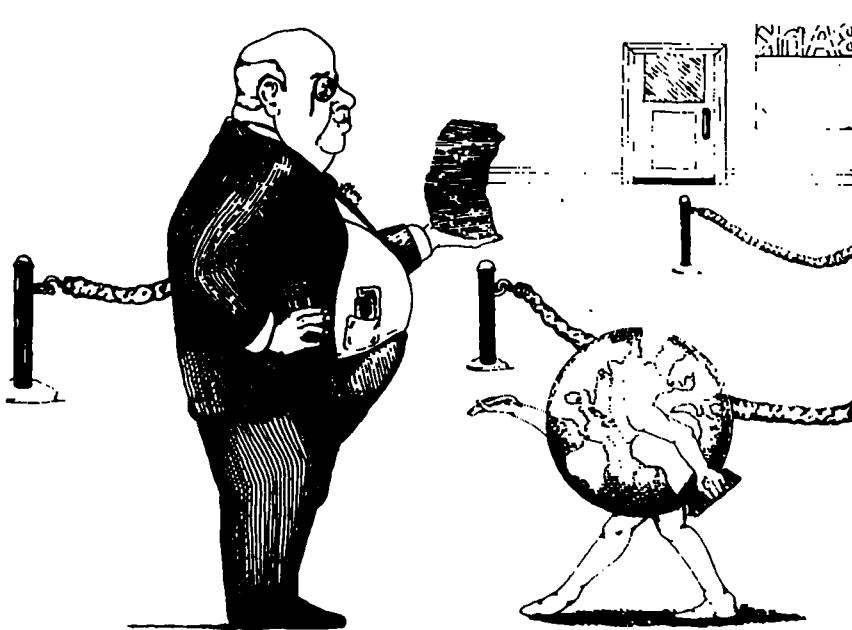


ternational financial market of quite unprecedented scope and magnitude. As one banker could say toward the end of the 1960s, "By building an apparatus in an amazingly short time for the collection and redistribution of the world's surplus cash and capital resources, the commercial banks have produced a unique machinery for serving the financial needs of the whole world." And thus was the scene set for the return of the banks to center stage.

The catalyst was the rapid rise of oil prices beginning in 1973. As Winston Churchill said in another context, never before had so many owed so much to so few. On the one hand were the OPEC producers, receiving more money than most could immediately spend; a safe refuge for their new wealth had to be found somewhere. On the other hand were the oil consumers, faced with import bills far greater than many could immediately pay; the funds had to be borrowed from someone. And there, in between, were the banks, already practiced at taking and lending money internationally and quite prepared, for a consideration, to act the role of intermediaries in the process of "recycling petrodollars." Sampson quotes a U.S. Senate staff report: "While the oil price rise was something close to a disaster for the world economy, it created a bonanza for the banks." In short order, private institutions displaced the IMF and World Bank as the principal source of external finance to nations.

That the impact of the banks intermediary role has been positive thus far cannot be doubted. Had they not been there to facilitate the recycling of OPEC surplus earnings to countries in need, governments might well have slipped back into the mutually destructive "beggar-thy-neighbor" syndrome that helped produce the Great Depression of the 1930s. But clearly there are risks too, as Sampson emphasizes—in particular the risk of default by a major borrower (Poland? Turkey? Brazil?) soon leading to generalized financial chaos as debt piles upon debt. Metaphors for the current situation abound. One banker describes it as a merry-go-round that can keep going only so long as no one tries to get off. Others speak of mutual hostages or of an embrace in which debtors and creditors now find



themselves inexorably locked. The dangers are highlighted by Sampson's glances back in history, which richly illustrate how little really is new under the sun. In the fifteenth century the financial empire of the Medicis nearly foundered because, as their historian concluded, they "succumbed to the temptation of seeking an outlet for surplus cash in making dangerous loans to princes." In the nineteenth century numerous crises resulted from the defaults of some sovereign borrowers. And then, of course, there was the financial collapse of the 1930s, still fresh in the memories of older bankers. "No one who went through those times," Sampson quotes one as saying, "can feel altogether confident when people today say that the world's banking system is fundamentally sound."

Yet if the dangers are so obvious, how could we have allowed ourselves once again to become so dependent on the money lenders? In fact, we got here *faute de mieux*; our governments have failed to come up with anything sounder. Ultimately, responsibility for maintaining order in the system rests with the public authorities, not private entities. Else what are governments for? Sampson is right in concluding that the world's economic future is too important to be left to bankers alone. As he writes: "The creation of a more stable economic system can only be achieved by cooperation between nations." The question is whether governments

will remember the past or whether, as Santayana warned, they are condemned to repeat it. [WV]

**THE ENDLESS WAR:  
FIFTY YEARS OF STRUGGLE  
IN VIETNAM**  
by James Pinckney Harrison  
(The Free Press; xii+373 pp.; \$17.95)

*Paul M. Kattenburg*

The stream of histories, studies, and analyses generated by Vietnam seems as endless as the war—or, more properly, the revolutionary struggle—that Harrison recounts in this new volume. This is all to the good; if such books as Harrison's are indeed read and thus serve the educational purpose for which most of them were intended.

Harrison emphasizes the key years 1930-80 in his always coherent though somewhat surprising organization of the vast amount of material at hand. Part one of the book, for example, is called "History Read Backward: The Final, First and Second Victories of the Vietnamese Communists." It takes us back and forth from the final and, in the Communist point of view, prematurely victorious offensive of 1975 to the first revolutionary upsurges before World War II and the "eight years' arduous struggle" against the French. Harrison then goes on, in his second part, to ex-

amine Communist strengths, contrasting them to the weaknesses of the various anti-Communist movements and regimes that emerged during various periods in Vietnam. Finally, in the third part of his book, he moves to a detailed examination of the second, i.e., American, Indochina war.

But Harrison also digs at length into the late nineteenth/early twentieth-century roots of the Communist movement and into the early activities of those remarkable men—Ho, Dong, Truong Chinh, Giap, and Le Duan among many others—who were to become the leadership core during the crucial fifty years. What is more, this study is unique in the Vietnam war literature in carrying the tale well beyond 1975 and into the troubled times of postwar reconstruction, Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, and continuing conflict with China. "Endless war," to be sure.

The author relies heavily on secondary-source literature, primarily French and American, which he has thoroughly mastered—not a mean feat, considering its abundance. And he produces frequent and useful comparisons between the evolution of the Chinese Communist movement, on which he is a noted specialist, and the Vietnamese one. One may, however, regret the occasional intrusion of unattributed and dubious citations; an occasionally naive reliance on dogmatic Communist assertions as if they were the gospel truth; and the thin treatment of certain important aspects (primarily diplomatic, such as the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962) that appear to be thrown in mainly for the record.

More important, one may question the need for still another history based largely on already well-researched material on Vietnamese communism and a retelling of well-known aspects of French, Japanese, U.S., and South Vietnamese policies and actions during 1930-75. For Harrison most of the reason seems to have been an obsession with finding a better answer than those yet provided to the mystery of how the Vietnamese Communists survived over such a long period and eventually triumphed against such overwhelming odds. He searches earnestly for this answer throughout the volume. He seems, as have others before him,

to find part of the answer in the marriage of Communist Vietnam's nationalist convictions with ideological dedication and organizational capacity. With regard to the latter, Harrison's description of the years of underground guerrilla existence in thousands of kilometers of tunnels and caves is especially masterly. Ultimately, though, the author appears as abashed at the revolutionaries' survival capacity at the end of his volume as he is at the beginning. But his account of the odds against which they triumphed and of their incredible sufferings and resilience is certainly one of the best in the literature.

One wishes that every student in America would read such an analysis as this of a small people's determination to shape its future in its own way and of the foibles and follies of those in France and later in America who tried to impose their dominion. Today's American college students were under ten years old at the height of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Perhaps the recently observable interest among them in finding out what Vietnam was all about will help make the wish come true. [WV]

American governments are being held up to public condemnation for learning their lessons so well.

The tremors were felt despite the contradictions in Carter's policy from the very start: his specific exemption of South Korea and the Philippines because of their strategic importance and his singling out of the less important Argentina, Uruguay, and Ethiopia for discontinuance of American aid. The tremors were felt because Jimmy Carter, whether by design or by accident, propounded human rights at a time when abuses had risen sharply in many Latin American countries; and, in any event, the U.S. historically has exercised political and economic domination over Latin America. With the exception of Cuba, the Southern Hemisphere is the tail that cannot wag the dog. It lives in the shadow of the United States, and every shift of U.S. policy means a change of climate for Latin America.

Yet at the close of Carter's one-term presidency there had been little substantial progress in human rights. The number of people being kidnapped by the Argentine Government was down tremendously, but the government still saw no need to account for the over ten thousand people who had "disappeared" since the military coup of 1976. Chile's General Augusto Pinochet, whose bloody coup in 1973 makes Poland's martial law rule seem like a Boy Scout outing, rewrote Chile's laws, enabling him to retain the presidency virtually for life.

Although the number of violations decreased, this was only because the regimes succeeded in their goal of destroying the political clout of leftist and reformist political movements through the repression of individuals and of institutions like political parties and labor unions. By the end of Carter's administration the repressive apparatus in both of these countries was still in place, and violations could increase overnight if real or alleged leftist groups tried to pick up the pieces of their political life.

Much of this failure can be easily attributed to the general ineptitude of the Carter administration. But other questions must be raised as well. How did the demands of office temper the president's moral commitment to human rights? What are the internal dynamics that cause the repression in today's Latin American societies and

#### HUMAN RIGHTS AND UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA

by Lars Schoultz

(Princeton University Press; xviii+421 pp.; \$32.50/\$7.95)

*Agostino Bono*

When Jimmy Carter proclaimed human rights a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy, he sent tremors through all of Latin America. To the people whose relatives had "disappeared" under repressive military regimes, especially in Chile and Argentina, his words brought a ray of hope. For Latin America's military governments there came the sudden realization that an anti-Communist stance would not guarantee U.S. silence about torture, murder, and the trampling of constitutional rights.

By its rhetoric and an assembly line of aid programs designed to teach Latin American regimes how to control their own citizens, the United States itself was largely responsible for these abuses. Now the same Latin