period of time. I found no errors, either mathematical or typographical, in what was admittedly a rather sporadic reading. In spite of all the detail, the format of the printed page does not tend to oppress, and the formulas and diagrams are well displayed. I should also add that I don't get universal approval when carrying on in the above strain. In my department, for example, I try to push Lang's book "Algebra" as a first year graduate algebra text. It seems to me that it proceeds at an ideal pace, and covers a great deal of material, focusing attention as it does on key ideas, and leaving to the reader what the reader should have left to him. However the book is hardly ever used here, since I am told by my colleagues that the students prefer a book in which everything is done for them. The result is that we invariably use a book in which less material is covered in more space, where subscripts flourish on superscripts, and where little attempt is made to distinguish the important from the routine. Thus I can be reasonably sure that there are those who would prefer the present book to anything I might recommend for such a course. Nevertheless, I maintain that when an author is tempted to include a minor verification, he should ask himself for whom he is doing it. If he is simply satisfying himself that the point is trivial, then he should omit it. But if he thinks he is doing some potential reader a service, he might better consider advising that reader that he is out of his depth. Traffic should not be slowed for the pedestrian walking down the white line. It should rather be suggested that he would be happier on the sidewalk.

BARRY M. MITCHELL

Categories of algebraic systems, by Mario Petrich, Lecture Notes in Mathematics, vol. 553, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, 1976, viii + 217 pp., $10.20.

Mal'cev varieties, by Jonathan D. H. Smith, Lecture Notes in Mathematics, vol. 554, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, 1976, viii + 156 pp., $7.40.

> . . . ask not what your country can do for you;
> ask what you can do for your country.
>
> J. F. Kennedy

1. I was introduced to the concept of a category around 1960 by A. G. Kurosh. He pointed out that the origin of a segment of category theory and a part of lattice theory was in the observation that many results on direct decomposition of groups (e.g., the Kurosh-Ore Theorem and the Ore Theorem) depend very little on the structure of the group. The proofs can be stated very simply in terms of homomorphisms of groups and their properties (that is, in a categorical language) or in terms of the set theoretic inclusion among the normal subgroups of a group (that is, in lattice theoretic language).

Category theory was started by S. Eilenberg and S. Mac Lane [2], [3] as a