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America in Vietnam

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& . . . [cost] of liv[ing], and pray that they may be increased."

Concerning operation of the cutters, although their primary mission was revenue collection, they quickly were engaged in such additional duties as aiding distressed mariners, charting the harbors and coastal waters, maintaining aids to navigation and augmenting the new Navy during the Quasi-War with France. During that period, the cutters convoyed American merchant ships, helped keep open the sealanes of the North Atlantic and the Caribbean, captured 16 armed French vessels, participated in the capture of four others and recaptured 10 American vessels that had been seized by the French. One master even developed a method to distill fresh water from salt water aboard ship, no doubt the precursor of today's ship-board evaporators.

Coast Guard and Navy officers and those with a liking for American history should find this a fascinating book despite the narrow time period covered and the resemblance to a doctoral dissertation. The similarity of problems of the 1790s and the 1970s should give us cause to reflect on how far we really have come in the past 200 years.

J.W. DUENZL
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard

Lewy, Guenter. *America in Vietnam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. 576pp.

Shortly after the fall of Saigon, President Ford announced that there would be no official investigation of the causes of the American defeat in Southeast Asia. By and large, journalists and scholars have exhibited a similar disinterest. Vietnam is yesterday's newspaper that featured a confusing, emotional and tragic story we'd rather forget.

One, however, who chose to analyze rather than ignore the war is Dr. Guenter Lewy, Professor of Political Science

at the University of Massachusetts. A scholar who previously had been nominated for a National Book Award, Lewy devoted 5 years of research to his subject. The result is an excellent book organized around the examination of two issues: U.S. military strategy and tactics in Vietnam and the morality of the U.S. combat conduct.

Lewy's 200-page military history of the Vietnam war—the first half of the book—relies extensively upon thousands of official secret reports he demanded and received under the Freedom of Information Act. He explains succinctly the major phases of the war, criticizing as futile the basic U.S. military strategy of attrition. He attributes this strategy to organizational determinism: a military bureaucracy that persisted in "doing its thing" even when its own analyses (that Lewy quotes) damned the strategy. According to Lewy, it was this "special [military] knowledge that Westmoreland and most of his subordinates had [that] equipped them poorly to understand the political and social dynamics of the war."

Lewy does not suggest that it was communist rhetoric that triumphed over American bullets. The final defeat of South Vietnam was brought about by a strong, modern, conventional North Vietnamese army. Lewy's point is that the basic South Vietnamese weakness was a lack of leadership. U.S. military professionals, he writes, knew of and yet chose to ignore that fact, preferring to fight in place of the South Vietnamese. Lewy does not suggest, however, that defeat was inevitable. He explains, without excusing them, Thieu's 1975 decisions as heavily influenced by the sharp drop in American material support. He cites Nixon's 1973 secret written promise that the United States "will respond with full force should the [cease-fire] settlement be violated by North Vietnam." Lewy concludes that the fall of South Vietnam had many causes: the iron will and incredible

sacrifice of lives by the North Vietnamese politbureau; lack of South Vietnamese leadership and of a cohesive society; an inept U.S. military strategy; and American domestic divisiveness and incoherent war aims.

Lewy devotes the latter half of his book to the moral aspects of the U.S. military conduct of the war. He deals with terrorism, atrocities, prisoners, and aerial bombing. For each subject he systematically presents the case against the U.S. military and reviews the evidence. Many of the accusations were well-publicized, as were the accusers: David Dellinger, Richard Falk, Jane Fonda, Ramsey Clark, etc. Lewy concludes that "charges of officially condoned illegal and grossly immoral conduct are without substance." He states that the American military showed more concern for the safety and property of civilians during the Vietnam war than during World War II or the Korean war. The reader is left with the impression that truth about the American military conduct in Vietnam counted for less than political expediency and news sensationalism.

In sum, Professor Lewy has written a careful, documented, readable capsule military history of the U.S. military effort in Vietnam. It is an excellent professional work.

F.J. WEST
Naval War College

Murphy, Paul J., ed. *Naval Power in Soviet Policy*. Washington: U.S. Dept. of the Air Force, 1978. 341pp.

This is a balanced, scholarly, and current collection of essays for serious students of the Soviet Navy. The tired "Russians are coming in Tall Ships!" material standard in popularized writing for the past 15 years is absent. This is a lean, tough book written by professionals for other professionals who are not reluctant to let their minds probe ahead of any party line. Its solid con-

tent is comparable to that of the landmark McCwire series at a fraction of their price.

A concise opening chapter, cataloging Admiral Gorshkov's writing by subject, serves as a springboard for discussion of policy and Soviet naval employment. Included is William H. Thomson's essay on the long and continuing internal debate on the role of Russian navies in Russian policy concluding that Gorshkov faces internal Soviet opposition to his vision for the navy and that it is questionable to assume that all of his writings will be translated into naval reality. John J. "Buck" Herzog matches Soviet naval development with unfolding national purposes and makes the best case yet for the existence of an important Soviet pro-SSBN mission—a logical theory gaining belated acceptance in the United States. Concluding the policy/naval employment section, Alva M. Bowen's essay examines the Anglo-German and Soviet-American naval rivalries, and is a useful reminder of the continental origins of Soviet naval doctrine.

The second part of the book, "Naval War-Fighting: Capabilities and Missions," plows scant new ground but adds current and complete summaries of structure of the Soviet Navy and Soviet Naval Aviation by the editor to updates of the works of Michael McCwire and Robert W. Herrick. The chapter on Soviet Naval Aviation is a particularly useful and complete reference. Chapters by Claude R. Thorpe on the use of the Delphi Technique in determining Soviet naval mission priorities and by the team of Dimitry N. Ivanoff and Frank M. Murphy on the methodology of predicting Soviet naval technology are informative but concern analytic technique more than the Soviet Navy. Donald C. Daniel of the U.S. Navy Postgraduate School explores trends in major Soviet naval exercises in a piece worth remembering when OKEAN 80 begins its run on the world oceans.