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The American Naval Revolution

R. H. Wilson
U.S. Navy

Walter R. Herrick Jr.

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Herrick, Walter R., Jr. *The American Naval Revolution*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966. 274 p.

The setting of *The American Naval Revolution* is the period after the Civil War and up through the Spanish-American War. The origins of a modern Navy started during this time when the construction of ships changed from wood to iron to steel; propulsion changed from sail to steam; the breech-loading, rifled naval gun came into its own; and turrets and armor plate were introduced. Along with these physical changes came the development of tactics, the strategic concepts of Mahan, the establishment of the bureau system, and the start of the Naval War College. The author treats the problems and disputes associated with each of the changes. None was made easily, and much of the opposition to progress stemmed from within the Navy. In supporting this point, the author cites Benjamin Franklin Tracy, the Secretary of the Navy from 1889 to 1893, rather than a naval officer as the person most influential in implementing the changes and laying the groundwork for a contemporary Navy. The reader will find that the arguments used by those opposed to the progressive changes over a half century ago sound familiar today, and the same areas which were controversial then are still controversial. The last part of the book considers the use of the modern Navy in promoting interests of the United States and examines its performance in combat during the Spanish-American War. Mr. Herrick has come up with a well-documented and very interesting book. It opens up a little-known but a highly important era in American naval history.

R. H. WILSON
Commander, U.S. Navy

Knoebl, Kuno, *Victor Charlie*. New York: Praeger, 1967. 304 p.

Mr. Knoebl lays no claim to any particular expertise in either political attitudes or warfare in any form. He offers his observations tinged by the horror, pity, or frustration of the moment in an attempt to picture for the reader the frightening intensity and complexity of the Vietnamese war. His contribution is valuable for the scope of activity he shows. Few Westerners have traveled so extensively — in recent times — among the soldiers and cadres of both the South Vietnamese/American Government and the Viet Cong.

To err is human and Mr. Knoebl is demonstrably human. He has scarcely a good word for any South Vietnamese official, military or civilian. His depiction of American troops — from the Saigon bars to the Special Forces outposts — carries an obvious bias, for he is quick to highlight their faults and errors and only reluctantly denotes their generosity or gallantry in action. Conversely, the Viet Cong, or "Victor Charlie," are shown as men willing to endure unbelievable hardships and continue with unabated fervor their campaign to prevent foreign domination. Murder, assassination, torture, kidnapping, and forced labor are dismissed as necessary implements of the Viet Cong to prosecute their war. These shortcomings do serve to underline Mr. Knoebl's main thesis — that the Viet Cong are not exclusively Communists, or battling for a Communist Government, but that they are too often peasants struggling to stay alive and free from a corrupt and oppressive regime. He holds out little hope for a final political victory by the United States and the Government of South Vietnam over the National Liberation Front.