

1968

## Victor Charlie

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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.

In the Introduction, Mr. Bernard Fall indicates that as an Austrian writer and reporter, Mr. Knoebl exerts a not insignificant influence in Europe and that he deserves an audience in America. The reviewer would agree, with a caution to the reader to exercise to the fullest his sense of proportion and balance to compensate for the author's lack of these characteristics in his reporting. Certainly, it is not possible in one short book to cover comprehensively the war in Vietnam. Nevertheless, Mr. Knoebl has given a reporter's view of a wide range of incidents and attitudes that renders this interesting book well worth the reader's time.

R. L. DODD  
Commander, U.S. Navy

Mackintosh, Malcolm. *Juggernaut*. New York: Macmillan, 1967. 320 p.

In this history of the growth of the Soviet Armed Forces since their foundation in 1918 some interesting facts are presented, especially the evolution of strategy that prevailed until the purges of 1937. The military leaders up to that time had worked out a realistic military tactics doctrine that, if it had been followed, would have vitalized the Soviet Armed Forces. The purges under Stalin soon reduced whatever originality and forcefulness existed in the Armed Forces to an utter collapse of morale. All continuity in military thought and training was replaced by total control by fear, and this cost the Soviets dearly in 1941. The military was completely subordinated to Stalin and his rule by terror, which lasted until his death in 1953. The main portion of this book deals with World War II and Russia's valiant effort to protect her homeland. Loaded with names, dates, and descriptions of even the most insignificant of battles, this has the effect of greatly attenuating the interest of the reader.

The author hastily wraps up the post-Stalin era in a few pages that present nothing new to the student of the Naval War College. The Soviets' reappraisal of their military doctrine was due to their successes in the development of long-range missiles and nuclear weapons. However, they were faced with the dilemma of deciding just how valuable conventional forces would continue to be in any future world war. Here the author credits President Kennedy's emphasis on such a capability as the catalyst that caused the Soviets to react to the need for increasing their conventional forces. The sources utilized seem fairly accurate, although the reader is cautioned to recheck any figures on the strength of the Soviet Armed Forces with other material. Mr. Mackintosh concludes, rather ineptly, that the hopeful element for the future is "if the peoples of Russia had the final say in Soviet policy, a new world war . . . would not be their way of achieving their national aims." He ignores the real issue here and that is: What chance do the Soviet people have of obtaining this voice?

W. K. CALLAM  
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Air Force

Paget, Julian. *Counter-Insurgency Operations; Techniques of Guerrilla Warfare*. New York: Walker, 1967. 189 p.

This book studies three successful counterinsurgency campaigns conducted by the British Army in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus during the last 20 years. The author, Lt. Col. Julian Paget of the British Army, has made an analysis of each campaign in order to search out factors and principles to be deduced from lessons learned. These he has isolated and identified as necessary for proper prosecution of present and future counterinsurgency campaigns.