

## Book Reviews

*The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War*, by Stein Tonnesson. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute and London: Sage, 1991. 458 pages.

by Robert D. Schuizinger

This long, detailed book treats the extremely important subject of the interrelations between social developments inside Vietnam and the international context of the Second World War. Stein Tonnesson has made extensive use of archives in Britain, France, the United States, and Vietnam. He spent a good deal of time in Vietnam in 1989, where he interviewed several governmental figures who played key roles in the revolution of 1945.

Tonnesson has used this mass of material to explain how the Vietnamese revolution of 1945 developed day-by-day in response to the fast-shifting events of the Second World War. He convincingly argues that Ho Chi Minh's successful declaration of an independent republic at the end of the Second World War derived very little from a preconceived plan. To Tonnesson, the nationalists of 1945 were hardly the revolutionary theorists they later made themselves out to be. Instead, their achievements were those of practical politicians who seized control of a highly fluid situation. Their work was aided by U.S. efforts to block the return of the French to Indochina. Tonnesson argues that Franklin D. Roosevelt took a keen interest in Indochina. His well-known antipathy toward the French led to a secret deceptive plan to undermine French rule at the hands of the Japanese. The Vietnamese nationalist revolutionaries then adeptly took advantage of the power vacuum to establish their republic. Here Tonnesson goes further than the evidence allows. In fact, in the conclusion the author acknowledges that he has not proved his assertion that Roosevelt secretly connived to fool the French and the Japanese into thinking that the United States planned an invasion of Vietnam.

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Some of the most useful discussion within *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945* involves the internal development of Vietnamese communism. Tonnesson has a real feel for the discussions within the higher councils of the Viet Minh. He knows the anthropological literature regarding peasant societies very well. He uses this theoretical background to explain how the Viet Minh adapted to the rapidly changing environment of a colonial nation at war.

This book deserves more attention than it is likely to receive, since it is intimidating in its denseness. The writing is wooden, sometimes virtually incomprehensible. The book could have been 150 pages shorter and not have lost a thing. It appears that very little if any editing was done to the manuscript. Tonnesson has a regrettable tendency to say why a subject is important, say what he is going to say, say it, repeat it, and then, most maddeningly of all, qualify and even recant what he has just said. The result is a book based on exceptionally fine research, with a good theoretical underpinning, that nevertheless leaves the reader wondering what precisely the author had in mind. This is a pity. Tonnesson may not be much of a writer, but he is an excellent researcher and someone of deep reading and knowledge of social scientific theory.

*Left Face: Soldier Unions and Resistance Movements in Modern Armies*, by David Cortright and Max Watts. Contributions in Military Studies, Number 107. New York: Greenwood, 1991. 282 pages; bibliographical references and index.

by Dana P. Eyre

Any book that begins with the sentence "Dear reader, we ask your indulgence for the peculiar nature of the volume before you" needs to be reviewed with care, lest the reviewer be accused of a lack of consideration for the authors' plea. This is particularly true when the authors ask for indulgence based on the difficulties they encountered balancing activist efforts and the demands of authorship. Activism is a bit on the wane these days, and efforts to blend it with scholarship should be encouraged. Unfortunately, however, the book is presented as a work of scholarship and judged as scholarship, *Left Face* is not the book it could be.

Cortright and Watts's book claims to be both a modern history and a theoretical explanation of soldier unions and resistance movements. Their

interest in the subject is rooted in the 1960s and 1970s. The author examines resistance movements in the 1980s (Cortright and Watts to found an independent left movement), and the farther the book moves from the 1960s, the weaker it becomes. As its rich, participant-level detailing of resistance movements in the United States is diluted in its less thoroughly developed sections elsewhere in the world, in its effort to cover the 1990s, and in its offering of military resistance."

The solid core of the book is concerned with resistance efforts in West Germany, France, Italy, and Holland, and in these sections the authors are clearly familiar with the subject. The organizing efforts are detailed and lively, and the authors' substantial backgrounds provide a useful set of life histories of these movements. The generally complete profile of organizations and their pattern is one of early, isolated structures that become more organized and international over time. The more organized and international movements are the more successful response in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the secular decline (although not the end) of the 1970s.

The accounts of the unionization of the military in Germany, the United States, and the Netherlands are the strongest in the book. Each account of the organizing and resistance process is detailed. The account of the U.S. military by the American Friends of the German Army (AFGE) examines the "incomplete unionism." The authors argue that the authoritarian style of modern soldier resistance movements is as it does to company commanders. The account of the Dutch Conscripts Union (C.O.) is particularly productive, giving rise to the "dilemma" of the "improved conditions" granted to Conscripts who enter the army. It is harder to motivate them when so many gains have already