

view that economic development necessarily prompts the middle classes to seek more democratic freedoms from authoritarian rulers has in effect been challenged by the latter volume.

Overall, there appears to be no direct correlation either way. Some countries that are regarded as high in terms of human development indices (HDI) are regarded as semi-authoritarian and authoritarian (Singapore and Brunei respectively), while others that are medium in terms of HDI (Indonesia and Malaysia) are regarded as semi-authoritarian and semi-democratic respectively. One finds it difficult to simply attach the label semi-authoritarian to Singapore and Indonesia in the same breath. Surely, there is a qualitative difference between a nation that has managed to provide for most of its citizens (Singapore) and one that has denied fundamental rights (the right of self-determination to East Timor), and labour rights in a society where wealth is skewed so dramatically.

Notwithstanding some of these difficulties and problems, the book is an informative one that should be read by undergraduates and those who want to gain an introduction to one of the world's most dynamic regions.

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***Secret Army, Secret War.* By Sedgwick Tourison.** Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995. 313 pp.

Written by a former intelligence officer in the U.S. Army, and a staff member of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, *Secret Army, Secret War* recounts what must rank as one of the most shameful episodes in America's involvement in Indochina. Between 1960 and 1968, the United States directed a series of covert military operations inside the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), during which 456 South Vietnamese "agents" were either captured or killed. The astounding incompetence displayed by the co-ordinators of this programme, and their subsequent betrayal of those imprisoned, almost defies belief. The first part of the book details the numerous attempts made to infiltrate teams of agents into the DRV, practically all of which

ended in complete failure. Most teams were captured within days, if not hours, of being inserted into the north. Often, troops from the North's public security force would be waiting at the designated drop-zone. If the radio operators within the teams were then persuaded to come under Hanoi's direction, they then began to transmit bogus reports back to Saigon, sometimes for extended periods of several years. In some cases, support teams were then sent into the DRV, at the behest of such bogus transmissions, resulting in immediate capture.

Tourison traces the genesis of this operation back to the early 1950s, when the French organized a series of Vietnamese agents to "stay behind" in North Vietnam, after the division of the country in 1954. This activity continued until late 1956, when contact with all of the "stay behinds" was suddenly lost, presumed captured. (One such agent operated a fireworks factory, which sadly blew up, prematurely ending his utility.) However, having recorded some success in inserting and retrieving civilian spies in the late 1950s, the United States made a decision in 1960 to upgrade this effort to include paramilitary teams of armed agents. The aim was to "inflict some level of discomfort on the North that paralleled the North's subversion in the South" (p. 37), and perhaps thereby try to deter an escalation of the conflict. Given the speed at which the inserted teams were captured, in retrospect it is abundantly clear that the entire project was hopelessly penetrated by Hanoi spies, and that most agent insertions were compromised from the outset. Apparently, the dire need for counter-intelligence activities in support of this covert project was wholly ignored. For those agents being sent on missions in the latter stages of the project, the fact that no previous team had returned was explained away as evidence that the earlier missions "were still doing their job up North" (p. 162). But to believe that such covert operations could continue for years on end without capture by an extensive and rigorous internal security apparatus, as was then operating in the DRV, is hard to comprehend. In a bid to understand this apparently nonsensical approach, Tourison speculates whether the project's planners did indeed know that almost all the inserted teams were being captured, and their radio operators "turned", but continued with the project in a bid to find out what misinformation Hanoi wished to impact. "Were they [the U.S.] playing with the North Vietnamese by continuing to send in teams in hope of discovering their plans and intentions?" (p. 169).

Far from daunted by the high failure rate of these covert missions, by 1962, the furious pace at which teams were inserted into the DRV meant that "Pentagon researchers were later unable to reconstruct

precisely where and when every team landed" (p. 81). Tourison argues that the reason for this stubborn refusal to accept that the project was a failure was simply a need by U.S. planners to believe that the project was a success — a form of extreme cognitive dissonance. To concede that the project was not working was an undesirable conclusion, and therefore not entertained. At the time when responsibility for the project was passed from the CIA to the Pentagon in 1964, faith in the project revolved around five teams believed to be active in the north. Yet all five teams were transmitting bogus reports, having been captured and their radio operators "turned". When the Pentagon took charge of the operation, it found "a number of so-called agents who were not qualified for anything ... [despite having] been on the payroll for a good number of years" (p. 126). Unable to release them from the operation, fearing that they would reveal details of the project, they were inserted into North Vietnam with the assumption that they would probably surrender at the first opportunity. At about this time, the objectives of the project changed markedly, from being one of "sending a message to Hanoi to reduce its infiltration into South Vietnam" (p. 123), to one of monitoring DRV troop movements into northern Laos. Tourison firmly asserts that the project became part of a bid to "protect the CIA's efforts in Laos, not, as the president was led to believe, to retaliate against Hanoi for its infiltration of agents into South Vietnam" (p. 313). Not only was the project conducted improperly, its motives also became somewhat dubious.

The latter half of the book attempts to depict the grim prison experiences of the South Vietnamese agents, from their capture in the 1960s to their eventual release in the 1980s. Apparently reluctant to pay the relatives of these agents the monthly salaries owed to them, as formally agreed if they should be taken prisoner, American officials told the families that the men were dead, even though they suspected — and sometimes knew — they had been captured. Quoting an army colonel, Tourison explains how the U.S. military phased out the salary payments of captured agents "by declaring many of them dead each month until we had written them all off (paid them) and removed them from the monthly payroll" (pp. 171–72). In a bid to justify this action, a former South Vietnamese officer explained that "when and if they got back, they would get all their back pay Unfortunately, no one ever thought we would lose the war" (p. 173). For the prisoners, too, news of the remarkably sudden collapse of South Vietnam was hard to comprehend, and it was not until 1977 when they met former officers of the South Vietnamese army in a labour detail did they accept the truth.

In the 1973 debriefing sessions held for returning American