

1970

The Commodores

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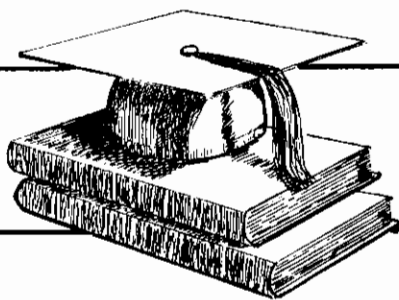
Jay D. Smith

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PROFESSIONAL READING

Djilas, Milovan. *The Unperfect Society*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969. 267 p.

In *The Unperfect Society*, Milovan Djilas, the much imprisoned Vice President of Yugoslavia, explains his revolt and his ideas "namely, that radical changes in Communism will take place, and are already doing so, principally caused by the system itself, as a result of the unreality of its ideology and the bleak outlook for the future of its reality." The author describes the struggle within himself as his ideas regarding communism changed from those of faithful allegiance to those of open criticism. His thoughts, or—more precisely—discussions, of Marxist theories intertwined, as he sees them, with the philosophies of Aristotle, Plato, Hegel, Rousseau, and Diderot, are the argument for his position. He states that the Marxist theories are not scientific as claimed but dogmatic statements based on limited observations from a social scientist's point of view. In fact, the dogma is so inflexible that the validity of Einstein's Theory of Relativity had to be held in disrepute, as it directly contradicted Marxian tenets. The author states that a reading of Engels' *Anti-Dühring* shows that communism did not arise out of scientific motives but from definite political party needs. He further states that communism's quasi-infallibility leads more surely to the ideology's self-destruction as its executives become more wedded to the dogma. In this same theme, the author states that communism becomes democratic only if

stripped of Marxist dogmas like "leadership for action," which really means privileges and powers based on ideological allegiances. Milovan Djilas concludes that the Communist Parties of the future will have no alternative but to be sociopolitical movements that strive in collaboration with others to achieve definite patterns of society and governments under their own national conditions.

The Unperfect Society will provide the serious student of the Communist movement with some new and interesting insights.

W. ABROMITIS
Captain, U.S. Navy

Guttridge, Leonard F. and Smith, Jay D. *The Commodores*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. 340 p.

For many, even those who have made a profession of going to sea, the heroes of the American sailing navy are too frequently cardboard figures, perhaps only remembered for some heroic utterance in the heat of battle. Here is a book that makes them live as men. *The Commodores* is a series of readable, lusty tales about the U.S. Navy from shortly after the Revolutionary War to just before the Civil War—and, almost incidentally, is factual, well-researched, and informative history. The book focuses on the ship captains of the early American Navy, their problems, triumphs, personalities, and faults. All of the men depicted at one time or another commanded a company of ships and so were entitled to the broad pennant and

courtesy title of Commodore; hence the title and the focus of the book. In the process of telling the stories of those early Commodores, the authors provide a portrait of the sailing Navy that is both entertaining and useful.

Many things have changed in the Navy since the days of sail; many have not. The tasks of the commanding officers of the Navy in preparing their ships for sea in the face of shortages of men, time, and material cannot help but strike a responsive chord in the heart of anyone who has faced the same problems with a modern man-of-war. The importance of shaking down a ship and crew until they are at the peak of combat readiness is also much the same. The authors attribute the striking success of the ships of the infant U.S. Navy in single-ship actions against the vessels of the world's dominant seapower to the superiority of American gunnery practice and to a degree of complacency on the part of the British. Neither lesson is to be ignored. Two of the highest of the many high points of the stories recounted are the monumental duel of seamanship in which the *Constitution*, under the command of Isaac Hull, escaped the determined pursuit of a British squadron, and the detailed account of the tragic *Chesapeake/Leopard* encounter, with its inescapable parallels to the equally tragic *Pueblo* incident. There can be few more enjoyable and painless ways to acquire an accurate and vivid understanding of the roots of the U.S. Navy than to read *The Commodores*. It is recommended highly.

J.A. BARBER, JR.
Commander, U.S. Navy

Hurewitz, Jacob., ed. *Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East*. New York: Praeger, 1969. 250 p.

One of the most persistent clichés in the lexicon of modern military planning is "the Soviet threat in the Mediter-

anean." In frequency of use (or misuse) it ranks just behind "the disarray of NATO" and somewhat ahead of "the power vacuum in the Indian Ocean." It shares with the other catch phrases a certain virtue of economy, since it lumps together a wide variety of complex policy issues under a single name tag for convenient reference; but it suffers the same weakness as well, and that is ambiguity. Is there really a "threat" in the Mediterranean? If so, is it military or political or both? Against whom is the threat directed and, in the absence of any very threatening activities by the Russians, under what circumstances? The present volume takes a useful first step in sharpening the syntax of analysis. It consists of a collection of essays on various aspects of the Soviet-American rivalry in the Middle East and Mediterranean. It grew out of a conference sponsored by the Academy of Political Science in December 1968, and much of the material was subsequently published in the *Proceedings* of that organization. Beginning with Professor Hurewitz's thoughtful examination of the origins of the rivalry, which establishes the analytical framework of the book, it then proceeds to examine four broad areas of the problem: military, economic, cultural, and political-diplomatic. The 16 contributing authors have been carefully selected, and the quality of scholarship and writing is uniformly excellent. The five articles on the military aspects of the problem should be of particular interest to naval officers, particularly Rear Adm. Joseph C. Wylie's discussion of the role of the 6th Fleet in U.S. diplomacy and the evaluation of the changing naval balance in the Mediterranean by Laurence W. Martin, author of *The Sea in Modern Strategy*. For those interested in the economic overtones of the rivalry, it would be difficult to find more cogent or readable presentations of the essential facts and issues than those provided by Gardner Patterson's discussion of the