

Even in the relatively brief time since *Inside Spetsnaz* appeared, extensive contemporary and historical materials addressing Soviet special operations forces have become available in the West. These include previously classified Soviet war experience volumes from World War II and earlier; KGB and MVD periodicals which until recently were restricted; far more forthcoming reports on the Soviet counterinsurgency experiences in Afghanistan; and Soviet reporting on the widespread employment of "special" units to counter internal unrest, "terrorism," narcotics trafficking, and other challenges to central authority and control inside the USSR. The availability of these new materials make *Inside Spetsnaz* all the more valuable for Western analysts seeking to identify, understand, and evaluate a confusing array of special operations forces under MoD, KGB, and MVD control -- forces that have an historic trail the book has done much to mark.

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Endnotes

1. Sergei Ptichkin, "Kommandirovka v spetsnac" (A posting to spetsnaz), *Sovetskii voyn* (Soviet soldier), no. 22 (1990), pp. 10-14.

Todd, Olivier. *Cruel April: The Fall of Saigon*. New York: Norton, 1989.

A French journalist, Olivier Todd began his professional coverage of the Viet Nam wars very sympathetic to the Communist side. His extensive experience in South Viet Nam and in Hanoi changed his views.

In Saigon during the final months he constantly confronted the illusions that many Westerners harbored: that the revolutionary forces in the South were independent of Hanoi, that Hanoi did not wish to conquer the South but only liberate it (that is, get the Americans out), and so forth. In his view, the public image of the Viet Nam wars, in France, the United States, and elsewhere, remains clouded by confusion and misinformation.

This book is perfect for the general reader, because Todd is right on all of the big questions. He rejects the myth that the South Vietnamese citizenry and Army were too passive or too pro-Hanoi to offer serious resistance to the Communist forces. He emphasizes the failure of the southern populace to rise up against the allegedly hated and hateful Saigon government. (Quite the contrary, as in 1968 and 1972, so even in what were clearly the last days of the independent South in April 1975, the population of Saigon remained orderly, a terribly revealing but often overlooked fact). He makes clear the incredulity

on the part of the South Vietnamese in the face of the growing American determination to abandon them to their fate.

Todd makes some points that even specialists will enjoy pondering. For instance, he thinks the Southern forces missed their major opportunity for survival in April 1975 by not withdrawing from Saigon into the Mekong, where the Communists had traditionally lacked popular support and where the North Vietnamese army could have followed only with great difficulty. He grasps the fact that the superb eleventh-hour defense of Zuan Loc by troops that nobody ever called first-class occurred mainly because the soldiers there knew that their families were to the south of them, that is, in the rear (unlike the forces in the northern regions whose understandable anxiety to get their relatives to safety resulted in the disintegration of whole divisions).

Many small touches give the book immediacy and vigor: the real nuggets gathered from the want ads and personal columns of the Saigon press; a brief sketch in acid of Nelson Rockefeller as an insensitive buffoon; the identification of TIME magazine's principal Vietnamese correspondent as a Hanoi agent.

Cruel April is valuable not only as an account of the last days of America's abandoned ally but also as an almost clinical look at what individuals and bureaucracies perceive and how they behave on the verge of an historic debacle.

Todd maintains that the agony of South Viet Nam provided time for most of the other states of South East Asia to get their houses in order, and that today nobody in the region is ignorant of what life is like in Communist Viet Nam. This may be true. Today everybody agrees that the Hanoi regime is awful, but so what? The real question is why were so many, including the well-informed and the highly placed, so blind to the truth about Hanoi at the time? Up to now, nobody has succeeded in giving us an answer to this question that we can use in the future.

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Pinkney, Robert. *Right-Wing Military Government*. London: Frances Pinter, 1990

Robert Pinkney's book is part of a series on Right-wing ideology and politics. It was therefore inevitable that military government would have to be considered, despite the fact that the concept of Right-wingery is perhaps especially complex in developing countries where after all, almost all recent military governments have occurred. Another complexity is that the countries which have suffered Right-wing military regimes themselves vary greatly both in terms of cultural background and level of socio-economic develop-