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A Country Such as This

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of National Socialism because it prevented the murder of fellow countrymen or it fulfilled a political idea in opposition to Nazism. This type of collaboration was really resistance in disguise and was a part of the fight to rid the country of the enemy.

Rings also discussed the role Resistance played in removing the enemy. Once again, the author describes four types. The first was the "symbolic" resistor. The work of such people he sees typified by the French Navy when it scuttled the fleet at Toulon in 1942. A second type of opponent, a "polemic" resistor, opposed the enemy through protest or through organizing protests. Such a person of course had to possess legally acquired power. "Defense" resistance was the third type. Here individuals sided with those in danger, or rallied to those who strove to protect those persons. Solidarity was the key to this resistance. The fourth type of resistance was "offensive." Rings subtitles this section "I Fight to the Death." He tells of individuals taking the fight to the enemy, harassing him with guerrilla tactics, and suffering high casualties. This seems a world apart from the other types of resistance but yet it interlocked with them. But with this pursuit of freedom came a staggering cost in lives as a result of reprisals by the occupying power. Often in the search for a few the enemy would kill thousands.

Finally, Rings deals with the unconquered Allies. To them, he says, the resistance movement and its

contribution to victory was simply a side issue. The author speculates that they held this view because professional soldiers had a low opinion of guerrilla warfare.

The book is a well researched, referenced, and documented testimony that collaboration existed alongside resistance. Read it for enlightenment because history has a tendency to repeat itself.

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Webb, James. *A Country Such as This*.
New York: Doubleday, 1983.
534pp. \$17.95

While openly embraced by reviewers, James Webb's first two novels sent shock waves of protest through the well-filled ranks of his readership. An explanation for this is not hard to find: the novice's flexible command of language, his ability to recreate the speech of fighting men, and his evocation of the camaraderie that comes of hardship appealed to a literary community always on the prowl for new talent. The books were vehicles for an exploration of controversial, difficult questions about military life, and Webb's tenacious tackling of those questions on terms all his own—terms that bowed to neither the naval establishment nor its detractors—did him the double service of offending both.

Those who sympathized with the antiwar movement of the sixties did not swallow the "moral" of *Fields of Fire*, that theirs was not the right to oppose a war they could not under-

stand; and graduates of the US Naval Academy who read *A Sense of Honor* did not like its portrayal of certain midshipmen as dirty-talking, sadistic swaggerers. But if any of the condemnation filtered through to Webb he simply ignored it, for in his third novel, *A Country Such as This*, he shows no signs of accommodating his critics.

Here the scope of events is expanded beyond that of the first two books. The story, opening before the Korean War, traces the divergent paths three Annapolis graduates follow as the vicissitudes of American life carry them through the world-weary, post-Watergate era. Each man is highly gifted in his own way. Joe Dingenfelder, a bright, fastidious Jew, is sent by the Air Force to MIT to study aeronautical engineering, and at the height of his career is researching the Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile at Vandenberg Air Force Base. The Navy pilot Red Leszczynski, a Polish American at once gentle and fiercely patriotic, becomes a Blue Angel and eventually the exec of a squadron of F-4 Phantoms flying bombing missions over North Vietnam. The most complex character is the marine Judd Smith, a Virginia mountain boy of Scots and Indian blood, a foul-mouthed woman chaser whose blind courage as leader of a rifle platoon in Korea earns him the Medal of Honor. After a job with the FBI he dons the robes of a reborn preacher in his home town of Bear Mountain Gap.

Obviously to do justice to the book's broad sweep of time and

space, the sort of questioning that has become Webb's stock-in-trade must cover more ground than his earlier writings did, and this leaves *A Country Such as This* vulnerable to the lack of focus that plagues such "epic" novels. If there is one concern that moves to the forefront, it is that of loyalty to one's country. What is it, what are its limitations, and does it take priority over family obligations? As the men and their wives awaken to the political realities of an America thrown from the cradle of the fifties into the whirlwind of social upheaval of the sixties, the answers become less clear-cut—it becomes necessary to define the parameter of the issue, and to this end Webb pits Judd against Joe's wife, Dorothy.

Dorothy is an Austrian Jew who fled the Nazi terror as a child and came to America. Filled with the bitterness of that experience, she sees the weapons race with the Soviets, black oppression, and the Vietnam War as different symptoms of the same disease: fascism. Ideologically and temperamentally estranged from Joe and his Academy friends—they are good-natured and conservative, she spiteful, argumentative, and radical—Dorothy leaves her husband and children without regrets and wins a seat in Congress as antiwar fever is spreading across the country.

Judd, hoping to do something about the growing disrespect shown the American flag, runs for Congress on the Republican ticket and wins. His fight against the liberals is to no avail—America pulls out of the war

and Nixon resigns his office under pressure. But despite a gnawing sense of helplessness, Judd holds his head high in the belief that, whatever one's opposition to the reigning political ethos, "loyalty to people and culture were the key to life."

Webb leaves not a minute's doubt which of these two characters is morally superior and to whose opinions he himself subscribes. Judd's political activities are an expression of loyalty to country; Dorothy's are a belated eruption of pent-up bile. Judd is handsome and manly; Dorothy ugly and unfeminine. He is faithful in his way to his family; she abandons hers.

Such blatant manipulation of the reader's sympathies can do no other than smother any attempt at nuance. Judd makes unexplained, passing remarks about people, events, and movements that go against his grain: the Vietnam Moratorium has "the undeniable media impact of a Hitlerian rally," McGovern is "the whiny South Dakota senator," and at the sight of bag ladies in Washington, DC, he mutters, "Women's lib hits the hoboes." These are, presumably, impressionistic strokes meant to create an image of the deterioration of American society in the sixties and seventies, but they are too general, sarcastic, and facile to do the trick.

What gets bypassed in the end is the heart of the tumultuous problems of that period. Red claims that if the Vietnam War was worth fighting it deserved an all-out effort—alright, but no one questions the if. The protestors are to Judd the spoiled

spawn of the baby boom years who never experienced war, yet he ignores the fact that many of them were indeed veterans. Attributing America's waning belief in itself primarily to antiwar activism, Judd skirts the issue of Watergate's own contribution: he dismisses that piece of foul play as merely "symptomatic of political abuses that have gone on throughout eternity."

It is unfortunate that Webb did not turn his attention away from characters debating and spouting their homespun philosophies to concentrate more on the Korean and Vietnam War sections. His own experience as a marine infantry commander in Vietnam has left him well equipped to picture a youthful America's brave but naive sons set loose in the dark and ancient labyrinth of Asian war. And, after all, showing the reader is always better than telling—or, in this case, lecturing—him.

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Lombard-Hobson, Sam. *A Sailor's War*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. 175pp. \$12.95

A Sailor's War is a personal account of the naval career of Sam Lombard-Hobson, starting with his days as a cadet at the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth and ending with his last wartime command as a lieutenant commander in 1944.

Those who love the sea, those who are interested in the differences between the Royal Navy and the American Navy, and those who just