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Small Comforts For Hard Times

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serious problems in sustaining an intense conflict with China. Perhaps the most important corrective step they have taken is to construct, at great expense, the \$1.5 billion Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) to the north of the vulnerable Trans-Siberian. Even so, their consumption could exceed their resupply capability in a war with China.

For their part, the Chinese seem to contemplate surviving Soviet conventional or nuclear strikes and winning a protracted struggle. Although they undoubtedly would fire their modest force of nuclear missiles if attacked by Soviet missiles, the Chinese strategy relies heavily on passive defense. They showed these passive defenses to Middleton. In Chapter 10 he describes the underground fortress system engineered by the Chinese people early in this decade. For those readers who have heard of Chinese tunnel technology but are not fully conversant with all the Chinese have done, Middleton provides the best information in print so far.

In an important strategic assessment, Middleton concludes that there is little hope for permanent reconciliation between Peking and Moscow. He says "The quarrel may abate. There even may be a rapprochement . . . , even though this would require a revolution in national and ideological outlooks by both parties. But this would lead only to a temporary truce, for the roots of conflict run too deep."

Although parts of this book already have been dated by the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed by China and Japan, for the serious student of the Sino-Soviet rift it should provide eye-witness flavor and some new insights. For a reader entering this fascinating field for the first time, *Duel of the Giants* will be an eye opener.

WILLIAM A. PLATTE
Captain, U.S. Navy

Mooney, Michael and Stuber, Florian, eds. *Small Comforts For Hard Times*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977. 402pp.

This collection of 25 essays deals with five broad themes: justice and human equality, private rights and the public good, technology and the ideal of human progress, war and social order, and education and the good society. The product of an extensive series of conferences on the humanities and public policy issues, the collection takes as its premise that "the humanities give light when used as aids to the understanding of current urgencies." I found no real comfort in these educators', lawyers', philosophers', architects', and doctors' debate on urgent public issues, nor light cast on the dark social problems these humanists purport to analyze. Unfortunately, the positive proposals and recommendations are often obscured by a competitive erudition that characterizes many of the selections. However, if one is interested in some novel and interesting concepts of our society, in addition to straightforward, no nonsense discussions of anthropocentricity, bioethics, neomorts, the social versus the scientific meaning of buildings, embourgeoisement, the rights of rocks, and the decline of humanities in secondary education, this is definitely a book for his shelf.

As an anthology of relatively short pieces, each broken down into subsections, the book provides those with specific interests an opportunity to pick and choose by author or subject. Some of the selections are enjoyable reading and their ideas are clearly set forth in simple prose, but the book as a work requires painfully slow and detailed reading, partly because of the complexity of the subjects and partly because writers must feel a compulsion to cast their ideas in an obscure, obtuse, pedantic manner. In my view, the stand-out selections include:

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"Justice—Compensatory and Discriminative"—A thoughtful discussion of discrimination and reverse discrimination using Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as a base.

"Private Rights and the Public Good"—An argument that the private rights and public good are not an either/or situation and that our traditional framework for analyzing them may be outmoded.

"On Privacy and Community"—Treats the terms privacy and community as related and attempts to define privacy in terms of community.

"Do Rocks Have Rights"—Interesting argument for environmental ethics and the recovery of our traditional ethical perspective.

"Living With Scarcity"—The problems of scarcity (hunger, pain, and deprivation) will not be solved by technology alone but the author offers a plan liberally injected with both ethics and technology, for coping with scarcity.

"The Technology of Life and Death"—Fascinating approach to the implications of the traditional definition of death and effect of some suggested changes on our society.

"Reflections on War, Utopias and Temporary Systems"—Calls for the concentration of society's energies on extending the institutions that elicit man's more noble qualities, some of which are found in war and not in utopia.

"The University and American Society"—Supports the tenets of liberal education and stresses the importance of the study of humanities in the context of the development of American education and its place in society today.

"Some Questions in General Education Today"—Discusses the dilemma of technical training versus education and the reproductive qualities that a liberal education imparts to a society. Marcus offers some suggestions to reduce the reparative nature of higher education.

In sum, there are some small comforts in the book. I think that it's a handy guide to looking at macropublic issues in a different, often unique manner. The comforts, however, are sufficiently small that their availability in the local library is sufficient.

JOHN P. MORSE
Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

Morgan, William J., et al., eds. *Autobiography of Rear Admiral Charles Wilkes, U.S. Navy, 1798-1877*. Washington: Naval History Division, 1978. 930pp.

The Naval History Division has published, with a minimum of editorial comment, the lengthy autobiography of Charles Wilkes, the officer who commanded the U.S. Exploring Expedition in 1838-1842, and who removed the Confederate Commissioners Mason and Slidell from the British packet steamer *Trent* in 1862. Both events were controversial then, and remain so today. But this newly available volume does not illuminate either event so well as it does the bizarre personality of Wilkes himself, who stands condemned by his own hand in these pages as petty, sanctimonious and tyrannical.

The best part of the book is Wilkes' account of his years as a midshipman in the old sailing navy of the 1820s and 30s. But as he progresses in rank, his account assumes more and more the character of a diatribe: his commanding officers were out to get him; the Secretary of the Navy was his enemy; all his subordinates were incompetent, mutinous, or both. What is surprising is not that Wilkes was twice court-martialed for his imperious activities when in command at sea, but that he was ever given a command at sea.

A recent volume by William Stanton entitled *The Great United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842* (Berkeley, 1975) in which Wilkes is portrayed as a stiff martinet is herein