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The Duel of the Giants: China and Russia in Asia

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114 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

Cavalry, this is a book for you. Moreover, David Johnson provides vignettes about the lives of Napoleon's cavalry generals and gives precise narrations of numerous cavalry engagements.

What is lacking in this book is any attempt at an analysis of the French Cavalry's organization, tactics, and development. There is no attempt to compare the social composition of the cavalry with other branches of the French Army. Finally, the author does not attempt to render any overall judgement on the utility of the mounted arm during the Napoleonic Wars.

Still, one must not be too harsh. Johnson's book is well written and profusely illustrated. It illuminates many interesting and important details of the cavalry's services.

STEVEN T. ROSS
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Middleton, Drew. *The Duel of the Giants: China and Russia in Asia*. New York: Scribner, 1978. 231pp.

Drew Middleton, the military correspondent of *The New York Times*, toured China for 3 weeks in the autumn of 1976 as the guest of the People's Republic of China. This popularly written book chronicles his impressions of that trip. It is a book mainly about China. The flavor is sympathetic to the Chinese, although he does not hesitate to point out Chinese shortcomings. The duel is seen through Chinese eyes: they are preparing against an attack by technologically superior "polar bears" from the North.

Can the People's Liberation Army withstand a Soviet conventional attack? Middleton doesn't see how, given present Chinese doctrine, training and logistics. The Chinese advantages lie in manpower and morale. Could the Chinese nation eventually consume a Soviet Army in a protracted struggle? Middleton would not be willing to so predict.

(The Russian novelist Andrei Amalrik

did predict that outcome in the suppressed 1984.)

Given the likelihood of some successful Soviet military action against China, the issue for Moscow, according to Middleton, is whether to attack before China can modernize the PLA or to wait for political change to make a military solution unnecessary. The risk in waiting is that in 20 years, after Chinese military modernization, an attack could have much less chance of success.

Although the Soviets have assembled a large force on the border and in Outer Mongolia (43 divisions (reinforced), with hundreds of tactical nuclear missiles and 900-1400 modern air defense and close support aircraft), and their doctrine and tactics are those of blitzkrieg, it is possible that the Soviet purpose is political and defensive. That is, the Red Army is so strong that if China should try any means but negotiation to resolve differences, Moscow would respond militarily with lightning speed and deadly intensity. This, of course, is only one assessment of Soviet intentions, and Middleton credits it to Lt. Gen. DeWitt C. Smith, Jr., USA, Commandant of the Army War College. Another assessment would be that Moscow's drive for détente and confirmed national borders in Europe in the early seventies was done to free Soviet forces for offensive action against China. Military operations could be imminent. Middleton discusses both the "garrison" and the "striking force" assessments, but does not choose. Instead, he falls back on the Churchillian description of Russia as an enigma.

Chapters 6 through 10 of this book are particularly good. Here Middleton analyzes the installations, organization, logistics, equipment, and tactics of, and military prospects for both sides. This kind of analysis is his forte. What becomes clear is that although the Soviets have marked advantages in almost all military accounts over the Chinese, they are nonetheless faced with

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
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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: