

thing selective and ideologically discriminating. Under the impress of the New Left and the unpopularity in America of our entry into Vietnam, only one kind of violence was judged, on an ever-widening basis, to be unholy, unacceptable. That was the violence exerted by the capitalist democracies; not the violence imposed in often terrorist fashion by the North Vietnamese, the Castro-led Cubans, the North Koreans, and other revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist states or guerrilla movements. The emerging revolutionary "pacifist" called for a rigorous differentiation between acts of war by the United States and those by peoples purportedly fighting for liberation from capitalism. Even the genocidal Khmer Rouge in Cambodia was given condign consideration by many of the new breed of pacifists.

As Lewy is careful to stress, there were and are some notable exceptions in this tale of the corruption of pacifism. One Ed Lazar of the AFSC was tireless in his reminders to fellow members that the Quaker declaration of 1660 on pacificism repudiated "all outward wars and strife, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatever; this is our testimony to the world." But such an ancient and honorable position was repugnant to the new breed of Marxist- and Communist-oriented pacifist. Russell Johnson, long a member of the AFSC, wrote an essay titled "The Meaning of the Cambodian Tragedy." We must hesitate, he said, "to rush to judgment and must strive to have some empathy with the Khmer revolutionaries."

No old Bolshevik of Leninist years could have outdone this new type of so-called pacifist in the '60s and '70s in America. For this new pacifist, capitalism was itself a form of violence irrespective of whether overt, actual violence was utilized. Not all members of the four pacifist groups flouted the classic principles of pacifism. But by the mid-1970s, Lewy makes plain, "all the major pacifist organizations had gradually come to support the armed struggle of the National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam. Necessarily this meant a compromise with the pacifist values of reconciliation and nonviolence and eventually the open acceptance of the legitimacy of the revolutionary 'struggle of the oppressed.'"

Pacifists, Lewy concludes, have every right to avoid the moral dilemmas posed by the world of statesmanship and state-

craft and seek individual salvation. Today, however, "pacifist groups counsel policies that are couched in the language of peace and justice but that in fact support and promote some of the most brutal and ruthless forces in the world."

Lewy might have concluded his excellent study with Thoreau's words: "There

is no odor so bad as that which arises from goodness tainted."

*Robert Nisbet's most recent works are The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America (Harper & Row) and Roosevelt and Stalin: The Failed Courtship (Regnery Gateway).*

## Yeah, It's Just Like That

BY LYNN SCARLETT

**Small Comforts: More Comments and Comic Pieces, by Tom Bodett**  
Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 166 pages, \$7.95 paper

**T**he other day my gray mood turned a dark charcoal. It happened just the way Tom Bodett describes such things. My car broke down half-way to work, my husband eventually came with his car, I took off in it, after which it, too, broke down. We all have *those* days.

Next time my mood is dark charcoal, I'm going to remember to dust off my copy of Bodett's *Small Comforts*. It will remind me that I'm not alone in my miseries, and it will make me laugh.

Bodett—the man behind that cowboyish voice of the Motel 6 radio commercials—is first and foremost an essayist. He doesn't expect to dazzle us with insight. He hopes, instead, that "at least once during the reading you stop to think, 'Yeah, it's just like that.'"

Bodett puzzles over the little things in life—wood piles, old picture albums, dishwashing, dogs, his favorite chair, or his socks. "Forget about the chicken and the egg, how far is up, and where does the time go. Just tell me where the lids to all my trash cans went, and can I find my missing socks there too?"

Bodett recounts with humor his daily tribulations, his accomplishments, his failures. Take for instance his battle against static cling. Shunning "those little blue perfumed foam rubber things you throw in the drier," Bodett sought other remedies. "Now, static electricity isn't exactly house current," writes Bodett. "You can't just unplug it, you have to ground it out.... So I thought this grounding principle could be applied to the problem of static cling. I tied one end of a copper ground wire to a rivet on a pair of 501s and the other end to the drier's metal

spinner. I started 'er up and in less than a minute found the clothes wound up with wire tighter than a hay bale."

Or consider his frustration with a pair of pretty expensive long johns—warm, durable, and comfortable, "but there was this tag in the back. It was made out of

**"Forget about the  
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there too?"**

something just short of stainless steel." Bodett tore it out after the first wear. But "the tag had been sewn on with about two thousand stitches per inch, and although the tag was gone, the stitches remained. It provided all the comfort of a serrated knife sawing away at my fourth lumbar."

Now, I don't wear long johns, but I have a few turtle necks with those tags. Yeah, it's *just* like that (except they saw away at my neck).

Bodett is a guy who values a hard day's work, recalling with nostalgia his days at construction jobs: "I remember how dangerous it is and what working people put up with to make a living. Mostly I

remember the pride that came with being that way."

Bodett also believes the good old generic American has an unsung heap of common sense. He is thus baffled at the warnings, bells, whistles, flashing lights, and signs that barrage us with every commodity we purchase. "NO SMOKING signs on self-serve gas pumps are the ultimate insult. Although there may be some individuals who don't understand the principles of octane, anyone who'd light up in a cloud of gas fumes would probably deserve everything he got. Mother Nature's cute little way of weeding out the bad apples."

If we'd just take a bit more responsibility for ourselves, Bodett figures, all we'd really need to follow is one single command—the one his third-grade teacher used to use a lot:

"Mr. Bodett," she'd snap.

"Yes, ma'am?"

"SHUT UP AND PAY ATTENTION!"

"Yes, ma'aaaam!"

Bodett modestly denies any philosophical profundity. But *Small Comforts* is, in fact, chock full of wisdom.

In an essay that could be a foreword to *In Pursuit*, Charles Murray's new book on happiness and public policy, Bodett describes a malcontented and bigoted rich chap, a truly unhappy man, and contrasts him to a guy down on his luck, pushing a grocery cart that contains everything he owns. But the guy is happy, working at odd jobs for merchants as he shuffles down the street.

It's not a new notion. We all know money can't buy happiness. But Bodett manages to convey that message in such a heartfelt way, describing real people in action.

And his essay "Wow" captures in three pages something about the wonder of this world unrivaled by whole volumes of erudite tomes. Bodett lay in bed one early morning contemplating all the mundane tasks and annoyances the day would bring.

"As I was lying there brooding, I heard my child stir. He rolled over—I assume he opened his eyes—and said, 'wow.' Suddenly, I felt like a heel.

"With all my training to 'think good thoughts,' 'look on the bright side,' and 'take it a day at a time,' I woke up to a near-miserable world. This little boy who knows nothing of optimism woke up, saw he had a new day, and gave it his grand-

est praise....

"It dawned on me that this innocent little child was at the place I wanted to be. To wake up in the morning, take a look at the world, and say 'wow' is probably about as close to contentment as a person can ever hope to get."

One final pearl of wisdom from Bodett,

"If you want to go somewhere, you gotta get on the bus." A common enough piece of advice, but Bodett has a way of making the reader really believe it—and really want to climb aboard.

*Book Review Editor Lynn Scarlett is also the research director of the Reason Foundation.*

## Where Are the Faint-Hearted Cravens?

BY PATRICK COX

**The Past Is Another Country, by Peter Wludyka**  
New York: Simon & Schuster, 396 pages, \$18.95

**P**eter Wludyka employs a familiar premise in *The Past is Another Country*—a future America occupied by the Soviet Union. Sixty years after the nuclear destruction of New York City and the surrender of the United States to the Soviets, a half-Russian, half-American teenage boy discovers the buried memoirs of a Polish hunchback priest who helped and then shot the Marxist priest who led the U.S. disarmament movement.

Alex Nurov, complete with a birthmark à la Gorbachev, must read the manuscript secretly to avoid betrayal. He leads his privileged life as the son of a high party official, flirting with elements of the repressed and poverty-stricken native population while he slowly assimilates the priest's story, written as a book within a book.

He finds many elements of the manuscript baffling. The name Jesus Christ is a puzzle, as is New York City. Of course, he sets out to solve the mystery, and ultimately his detective work leads to his downfall.

Wludyka deserves credit for painting an effectively depressing backdrop of an America colored by ubiquitous socialist shortages, dehumanizing betrayals, and the Communist Party class structure. The book is not science fiction, however, despite the fact that it is set in the future. Technology, if anything, has regressed. Nor is it true fantasy, because the book supposedly extrapolates from present political realities. And therein lies the problem.

Using the relatively near future as a vehicle for political or philosophical speculation is dangerous and difficult, because the transition from now to then must be

believable if the rest of the story is to be plausible. Most of the best pedagogic novels, such as Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*, work by avoiding that problem entirely. On the other hand, Tom Clancy's *Red Star Rising* and John Hackett's *World War III* work because they stick strictly to the probable.

A book that asks the reader to take its projections literally, or at least seriously, must employ authentic, historically realistic mechanisms. If it does not, the credibility of the entire story is called into doubt.

**T**he scenario of American subjugation in *The Past is Another Country* asks for altogether too much suspension of disbelief. It is exceedingly improbable that the United States would dump all its nuclear weapons into the ocean even if the Soviet Union agreed to do the same, simply because there are other nuclear powers in the world. But assuming some massive change in public opinion, one could argue that, after disarmament, the Soviets might intimidate the U.S. government into limp submission. Foolishly, I think, but one could argue it.

One cannot, however, convincingly argue that millions of Americans and their children would not engage in subversion and guerrilla warfare against an occupation army and bureaucracy. It is utterly inconceivable that Americans would cooperate so completely with an invasion force that in only a single generation—in just 60 years—almost all traces of objective history, tradition, and resistance would disappear. In Wludyka's book, opposition to the Soviet takeover is insignificant—