

from Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's 1984 speech on "The Use of Military Power" that General Powell's questions amplify, actually embody a much richer, and more realistic, understanding of the principles that should guide a nation deciding to wage war, regardless of type. The straw-man version misses this point. Part of the epic struggle will be a return to a more comprehensive understanding of war in all its varieties; the full Powell/Weinberger approach would be helpful in getting there.

The main shortcoming in *The Fourth Star*, however, is not its misrepresentation of Powell/Weinberger. Rather, it is: The epic struggle is not just within the Army, and not just for its future. The struggle is national. The Army is an important element of the struggle, but it is not the main element. As well as the authors do in presenting many elements of the "epic struggle," they miss this larger context. The stories of these four generals illuminate the struggle of our nation, within the family of nations, trying to come to grips with the collision of a still-emerging and often violent post-Cold War strategic environment, a still-evolving and often convulsive global information-age economy, nonstates waging a worldwide war, and all the social-political unrest such momentous change produces. If our national leaders, from both the executive and legislative branches, do not learn the right lessons from this war and take persistent and thoughtful action to modify our national-security laws, institutions, and processes, as well as the international conventions associated with war, adapting the Army will be insufficient to prepare for whatever future will unfold. The struggle is certainly epic, even if not in the sense the authors intended.

Honor Bright: History and Origins of the West Point Honor Code and System. By Lewis Sorley. New York: McGraw Hill Learning Solutions. 181 pages. \$37.00. **Reviewed by Colonel (Ret.) Charles D. Allen**, Assistant Professor of Cultural Sciences, US Army War College.

By way of self-disclosure, I will open as Pat Conroy did in *The Lords of Discipline*, "I wear the ring." Like the author, I was a West Point cadet and that experience has left an indelible mark on me as well as many others throughout American history. *Honor Bright* is a detailed historical review of the emergence and evolution of the West Point Honor Code and its implementation by means of the Honor System. Lewis Sorley is eminently qualified to tackle this project. A third-generation US Military Academy (USMA) graduate and history scholar, he taught at West Point and the US Army War College.

The book is well defined, adequately structured, and intentionally limited in scope. Much of the research is from the USMA archives and includes annual reports, doctoral dissertations, oral histories, and personal material. An integral portion of source materials is taken from the reports of several groups that have examined the implementation of the Honor System. These examinations generally followed a challenge to the sanctions (termination from the academy) or were the result of a significant event or scandal. While such events recounted in the book are few (two major incidents in the twentieth century), these scandals shook the foundation of the academy.

Woven throughout the author's narrative is the link to the professional military ethic. Accordingly, the chair of the William Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic, General (Ret.) Frederick Franks, provides the foreword for the book. The author presents a three-pronged formula related to the military profession, a sense of corporateness, body of expert knowledge, and self-governance of its membership by means

of an accepted set of values and ethics. It is the latter traits that Sorley examines in detail in his historical journey: to whom does the Honor Code and the Honor System belong? While necessary oversight is provided by the institutional Army and American society at large, it becomes readily apparent that the author believes the Honor Code and the supporting system must belong to and be embraced by the cadets if they are to be effective.

The book is written primarily for graduates of West Point and serves as a foil to compare experiences during their tenure, either as cadets or members of the staff and faculty. I found myself doing exactly that. Much of the history of West Point recounted in the book is well known to its graduates. Names such as Thayer, Cullum, Delafield, Brewington, and Upton are an integral part of a cadet's education but may not be as well-known to the casual reader as Lee, Grant, MacArthur, Taylor, and Abrams. The sense of corporateness of West Point cadets and graduates is evident in America's military throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sorley explores the role these leaders have played in times of war and peace.

The initial chapter outlines the history of the founding of West Point in 1802 and the appointment in 1817 of Sylvanus Thayer as superintendent. Thayer's appointment was designed to ostensibly get the academy and the cadets under control. Indeed, his first task was to get accountability of the cadets who were at various locations besides West Point. The vehicle used to establish decorum and discipline was the concept of the military officer's Code of Honor, which had its origin in European tradition and had been adapted and modified based on the American experience in the founding of the nation.

Various episodes of the self-policing of the Corps of Cadets are presented in accounts of the cadet "Vigilance Committees" that judged the conduct and employed actions (tacitly approved by the academy officials) against cadets determined to be in violation of the prevailing code of ethics. Sorley does an excellent job of documenting events leading to the institutionalization of the Cadet Honor Committee in 1922 and the eventual development and publication of the Cadet Honor Code in 1932. He examines these events through the prism of changes in American society and culture manifested in the experiences of cadets at West Point in the years following the formal establishment of the Honor Code.

This reviewer read with great interest how the author portrayed the cheating scandal of 1976, where 152 cadets were expelled. Of special note was the fact that five were members of the Honor Committee; an additional five committee members left the group in the aftermath of the scandal. Of interest was how the author dealt with the Borman Commission report (designed to identify and correct underlying causes of the scandal). In the chapter detailing the report the author finds some of the report and its findings "curious" and "surprising"—an implicit challenge by Sorley that the Borman Commission was "the most permissive." He is clearly more in favor of the findings of the 1989 Posvar Commission (a follow-on to the Borman Commission), which realized all but one of its 25 recommendations. More mature West Point graduates may be as interested in the examination of another scandal in early 1951 when the nationally acclaimed Army football team was at the core of pervasive violations of the Honor Code.

Well written and informative, *Honor Bright* will in all likelihood appeal to a very specific audience. The overall tenor of the book emphasizes the uniqueness of West Point to the point of verging on elitism as detailed in the Epilogue. It is rea-

sonable to assume that other military and educational institutions have faced similar ethical challenges. This reviewer would have appreciated information about how other esteemed institutions incorporated similar systems for ethical development and how such systems may have been reflected in the military service of their graduates. Is there evidence that the behavior and performance of West Point graduates inculcated with the Honor Code are any different from military officers from other sources of commission? An interesting point found in one of the book's endnotes is that the career success (promotion to colonel) of cadets re-admitted following the 1976 cheating scandal is commensurate with other members of graduating classes (19.5 percent compared to 20.7 percent). Other additional insights related to how the practice of the Honor Code and System fared with the introduction of minorities and women during the last decades of the twentieth century would have been of interest. Despite the limited scope of the book, readers will find it a valuable resource on the value of honorable and ethical conduct within organizations and professional bodies.

Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War. By Chris Bellamy. New York: Vintage Books, 2008. 880 pages. \$19.95. **Reviewed by Dr. Stephen J. Blank**, Professor of National Security Studies, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.

On the face of it Chris Bellamy should be the ideal author to write this book. He is an outstanding war correspondent and military historian, has a complete command of the requisite languages, and an intimate knowledge of the Soviet system. All of these virtues are evident throughout the book. Yet it is a disappointing and unbalanced work. To say this is not to dismiss the entire enterprise. Indeed, there are many valuable points here, for example Bellamy's discussion of the Eastern Front in World War II as an incarnation of Clausewitz's concept of absolute war, hence the title. This discussion is spot-on. Likewise, Bellamy's discussion of the big campaigns of 1941-43, the initial German offensives, Soviet counteroffensives, and battles such as Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad, and Kursk are superb. The problems, however, prevent the knowing reader from considering the book as a true history of Soviet Russia in WWII.

First, *Absolute War* is essentially an operational history of the war, and its coverage virtually ends in 1943. Much less space and consideration are given to the Soviet offensives of 1943-45 compared with the campaigns of 1941-43. Second, even though it is an operational history, the strategic consequences of these campaigns also get short shrift. Beyond those failings, which are lamentable, given Bellamy's diligence in depicting the earlier operations, there are other shortcomings that undermine the book's value.

A history of the war that lives up to the premise implicit in the title should give an account of more than just the battles that took place, however epochal they may have been. Yet we do not see that in this work. The reader needs to consider the omissions. There is virtually nothing about the recovery of the Soviet defense industry, one of the most heroic and consequential actions of the entire Eastern Front. Also absent is any detailed examination of the Stalinist deportation of entire nationalities and what these deportations meant in the context of the war and for the Soviet system. The absence of any exacting analysis of the campaigns of 1943-45 means that we do not get to see how the relationships between Stalin and his generals evolved, let alone the workings of other key governmental institutions, the Communist Party, secret police, etc. Little if anything is mentioned about the partisan campaign in the rear of the Nazi forces even