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## Honour Among Men and Nations

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largely irrelevant in the Vietnam situation. Summers details the agonizing process of how the Army's manuals evolved. Terms such as "victory" disappeared and in their place appeared "counterinsurgency," "limited objectives," "limited means," and such.

We lost our focus on the traditional primary objective: destroying the enemy's forces and his will to fight. We concentrated our efforts on the war's symptoms—the guerrilla in the south—rather than on the central threat—North Vietnam.

Summers points out that there was no "stab-in-the-back" attitude on the part of the military after Vietnam. Fairly, or unfairly, General Westmoreland shouldered much of the blame. This reviewer suggests that this reflects either a conscious or subconscious recognition on the part of the military as a whole that there was plenty of guilt to go around.

For the future, Summers warns that the military must regain the trust of its civilian leaders.

Colonel Summers has done us a great service. But will his advice be heeded? Chances not, because his book is but another articulate exposition of the lamentable fact that we are unwilling to learn from history. It shows once again what happens when another generation of leaders becomes convinced that their generation's problems are "different." It proves how unwise it is to place disproportionate emphasis on technological advances at the expense of a comprehensive consideration of human nature—the most important constant in international politics. Talleyrand's "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" is often quoted but seldom heeded.

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Best, Geoffrey, *Honour Among Men and Nations*. The 1981 Joanne Goodman Lectures. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. 108pp. \$13.50 paper \$7.50

According to the legendary Irishman, a lone woman could walk the length and breadth of Ireland in the old days without losing her honor even once. Historian Geoffrey Best (he is dean of the School of European Studies at the University of Sussex) adds, "Honour thy father and mother," "On my honour as a Scout," and "Love, honour, and obey," to illustrate the protean character of the word, its several uses having no common meaning. But, as Wittgenstein would

say, are all related to one another in many different ways.

Best is concerned with the concept of military and national honor and in this small book, a write-up of his Goodman Lectures at Toronto, he traces the waxing and waning of the idea from the 18th century to the present. He notes the prominent place of honor among the ideals of the *ancien régime* where he sees it as the strictly guarded treasure of the warrior nobility, an absolute, an end in itself. With the rise of nationalism (which is Best's *bête noire*), the value of honor was kept alive by the elite military officer class in Europe who held themselves apart both from the common soldiery and from

the bourgeoisie whose utilitarian spirit and concern with profit prevented them from entertaining the concept.

Paradoxically, the nations themselves took up the idea of honor and declared themselves willing to go to war to defend it. Best finds so much historical hypocrisy here that he recalls one of Emerson's rare funny lines, "The louder he talked of honor, the faster we counted the spoons."

Dean Best is encouraged by what he sees as a post-World War II trend in revitalizing and broadening the concept of wartime honor. He finds it in the renewed interest of nations in reconstructing the old international law of war. He notes the number of individual nations that now deny the legality of war crime defense pleas on the ground of superior orders. He cites the widening of the concept of wartime honor to include recognition of the heroism of civilians under bombardment and occupation. He does not despair of the oft-frustrated postwar attempts of nations to construct international bodies to settle disputes without war. He finds in certain general officers of the second world war men capable of envisioning a nonviolent and just international order. Not Clark, Patton, and MacArthur are Best's heroes, but Eisenhower, Ridgway, and Marshall. He quotes the British chiefs of staff's tribute to Marshall on VE-day with Pope's lines: "Friend to truth! of soul sincere, In action faithful, and in honour clear; Who broke no promise, served no private end, Who gained no title, and who lost no friend."

Best's thoughtful little book is not without its faults. One example: He sees in Alfred Thayer Mahan a spokesman for a generation of imperialists, chauvinists, pseudo-Darwinians, racists. But he cites a strange test to back it up—Mahan's words on the meaning of honor among men and nations: "Honor speaks for

itself; neither man nor nation should consent to that which is before God a shame to do or to allow." Now if one does not object to the theological metaphor—and to Mahan it was not metaphor but literal truth—that is really not a bad summing up of what one means by military and national honor—or the lack of it.

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Gabriel, Richard A. *To Serve With Honor: A Treatise on Military Ethics and the Way of the Soldier*. Westport, Conn.: 1982. 243pp. \$29.95

Brown, James and Michael J. Collins, eds. *Military Ethics and Professionalism: A Collection of Essays*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1981. 98pp.

In the wake of Vietnam, the ethics of the American military professional has become an important subject of inquiry. Richard Gabriel's earlier *Crisis in Command* analyzed military performance in Vietnam; *Managers and Gladiators* treated the military bureaucrat. *To Serve With Honor* is a natural progression toward analyzing the fundamentally opposed business and military ethics in the belief that systems analysis, cost-effectiveness criteria, and statistical measurements of military value started a process of erosion of the military ethic almost impossible to check. Successful management and efficiency of the business ethos are inconsistent with the qualities of duty, sacrifice, and group dedication expected of the military leader.\* The lamentable results of the managerial

\*Richard Nixon in *Leaders* makes much the same point, interestingly enough, distinguishing between managers (whose goal is "to do things right") and leaders (whose goal is "to do the right thing").