

Eisenhower killed Millions!?

Did Americans Run German Death Camps?

The Other Losses

Saturday Night Magazine recently wrote about a new book which blames the death of about one million German prisoners of war on the deliberate neglect of American and French forces in Europe after the Second World War in 1945. The book, by James Bacque blames Dwight Eisenhower, one of America's more popular presidents, then commander of the Allied forces. And despite the tremendous importance of his discovery, Bacque has been greeted with silence and disbelief.

In this feature, Varsity Associate Review Editor Ward McBurney tracks the reaction to Other Losses.

By Ward McBurney Canadian University Press

Did the French and American armies under Eisenhower condemn a million German prisoners to slow death through starvation and neglect after World War Two ended in Europe? James Bacque thinks so.

Three years of research in the field and in the United States National Archives, accompanied by interviews with former prisoners and U.S. Army personnel, are collected together in Bacque's polemical Other Losses.

The book came out in late August and was the cover story for Saturday Night magazine's September issue. The ad for the issue featured a shot of Ike when he commanded Allied troops in Europe and a the cutline, "EISENHOWER'S DEATH CAMPS: The last dirty secret of World War Two."

But the Saturday Night piece is the exception to the rule - what could be one of the most shattering discoveries of the century has been largely ignored by the press.

Saturday Night editor John Fraser said so far "no one has really tried to shoot down the thesis. The American media has been silent."

Bacque recalled the Toronto press conference held by Saturday Night to promote his book in an interview.

"To that conference were invited the New York Times, the Washington Post, Time magazine, The Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun, the CBC, NBC, ABC, CBS, major networks in four or five countries, and major press agencies such as Reuters and Associated Press," he said. "The attendance was three."

John Fraser, the editor of Saturday Night, asked some of the absent media why they didn't show. "No one here knew what to do with it," he recalled. "Those who came just thought it was a book launch - and here it was one of the major stories of our time."

Through literary agent Jack McClelland, Bacque approached over two dozen American publishing companies, all of which turned down Other Losses.

In Canada, the book conglomerate Stoddart publishing accepted the book.

Publishers in France and England refused the book as well. Outside of Canada, only Ulstein in West Germany have taken the bold step of releasing a book that asserts the following:

Eisenhower created a new class of prisoners near the end of the war in Europe: Disarmed Enemy Forces, or DEFs.

These prisoners were denied the rights of POWs under the Geneva Convention, namely the right to be fed and sheltered like their captor's reserve troops, the right to send and receive mail and the right to be visited by delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Under the pretext of a world food shortage, the Americans (not the British and Canadians) deliberately reduced the food rations of their DEFs to almost nothing. They provided next to no shelter or medical care for something like three million soldiers, old men, women and children gathered together in approximately 200 camps in occupied Germany.

While most DEFs were kept until 1949, most were gone by 1946.

A million of these people simply disappeared in the logistical shuffle Eisenhower engineered. The euphemism "Other Losses," employed in POW/DEF reports really meant "dead", Bacque writes.

Bacque was lead into his unlucky quest completely by accident.

"I was working on a book about (French resistance fighter) Raoul Laporterie who was saving refugees from the Nazis," Bacque said in an interview.

"When I looked into his archives, I discovered letters to him from a German, Hans Goertz, expressing gratitude to Laporterie for helping him, and I thought 'this guy (Laporterie)

was chased by the Gestapo and the Wehrmacht, he damn near died, and he helped Germans? What's going on here?"

Laporterie had helped Goertz get out of one of Allied camps.

Bacque went on to obtain many more personal accounts from Germans french and Americans. They supported his statistical findings with their own stories, gruesome echoes of the Nazi death camps.

One French captain, after taking over a POW/DEF camp from the U.S. forces, said at the time "this is just like the photographs of Buchenwald and Dachau." (The findings in Other Losses also blame the French Army for a quarter of a million prisoner deaths.)

While the mass media has been almost silent, the response of individuals to Other Losses is accumulating. "We've had a remarkable response," said Fraser, "mostly very moving, some of it noxious...there will be a special column in the December issue (of Saturday Night) on that response."

Wolfgang Von Richthofen, a retired German army officer was kept in the American camps for about six weeks. He said the camp conditions described in Other Losses matched his experience.

"They are accurate for the camps I was in - I can't say anything about the others. I was in the camp at Buderich and then (the camp) at Rhineberg, and the conditions there were even worse in some respects than the ones (described) in the book," he said.

"There were only the holes (that the prisoners dug for shelter) with nothing to cover them."

The academic community's reaction has ranged from silence to incredulity. At the University of Toronto most professors contacted refused to comment directly. They had not read the book. They were skeptical of what they had heard.

Professor Modris Eksteins, author of Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age, said "after the war Germany was confronted with extreme difficulties on the housing front and on the food front. Death was part of the general situation. Put into that context, it is not inconceivable that POWs would also die."

University of Toronto Political Science professor Richard

Gregor said the Germans brought it on themselves.

"I don't know what all the fuss is about," he said. "They were responsible for 50 million deaths (during the war) and tens of millions of starving victims in occupied Europe. The Americans, on the principles of fundamental justice, fed the victims before they fed the criminals."

Bacque is a novelist by trade, not a historian. This may have something to do with the cool reception Other Losses has received in the academic community. Professor Jack L. Granatstein of York University was quoted in the Montreal Gazette as saying "he (Bacque) doesn't know squat-all about the Second World War."

Bacque said students shouldn't believe everything the history books say.

"Most of them are full of lies about this sort of thing. Their authors have churned each others' work, hardly any of them go to the archives and none of them go into the field. Read skeptically."

"I may have made mistakes in the book," Bacque concluded, "and I will welcome corrections by academics. But they certainly need a kick in the ass in my opinion."

Other Losses was released in West Germany three weeks ago.

Missing Children

continued from front page 9

Claude Laurendeau, director of a professional youth centre in Montreal, refused to comment on why 38 per cent of children run away from institutions.

Despite their differing views, Clark and Armstrong recommend a national centre for missing and exploited children with a 24-hour hotline, which would educate the public on the plight of exploited children. (A Montreal investor has already expressed interest in financing a toll-free number.)

Inside the Casanova, Madonna's song "Who's That Girl?" blares from the jukebox. Sylvie has finished her hot-dog and wipes the grease on her jacket sleeves.

She says she is 19 years old, then asks the reporter, "But I look like I'm 15, right?"

Smiling, she adds that she acts in a theatre troupe and works on community projects. Her cigarette falls out of her hand into her lap.

At that moment, a deaf woman gestures wildly at Sylvie and her friends as she makes her way to a nearby table.

For the first time that night, Sylvie's face looks solemn. "I hate life, you know," she mutters.



Sharon, Lois & Bram
National Ambassadors
UNICEF Trick-or-Treat Campaign

October Is
UNICEF Month

Have Your Coins
Ready On
Halloween



unicef