

Remembering James Bacque

James Watson Bacque, an occasional contributor to *Humanist Perspectives* magazine, died on September 13, 2019, at the age of 90.

I met Jim and his wife Elisabeth on one occasion a few years ago when they were in Ottawa at a writers' conference. We had lunch together. There was also email and telephone communication concerning articles in *HP*. Bacque had a very long literary career as a journalist, editor, publisher, and author of history, fiction, biography, plays, and poetry. He was a founder of the Writers' Union of Canada. But Bacque's status as established writer and bestselling author ended following the 1989 publication of his book *Other Losses*, upon which he became a pariah of the mainstream publishing industry.

While visiting France in 1986 for research on the French resistance, Bacque came upon evidence of the deliberate killing through starvation, exposure, and lack of medical care of as many as one million German prisoners of war at the hands of the Allies, notably the Americans and French. Bacque researched his shocking discov-

ery through government records, personal interviews, and recorded eyewitness testimony. The policies of extermination were implemented under the command of General Dwight Eisenhower. The American government argued that millions of captured troops were not prisoners of war but "disarmed enemy forces" and therefore not covered by the Geneva Convention. Attempts by the International Red Cross to provide food shipments to the Allied prison camps were rebuffed and German towns and villages near the camps were put on notice that civilians who attempted to smuggle food into the camps would be shot on sight.

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POW mortality was much lower in areas that were not under Eisenhower's control. While some of Bacque's detractors tried to blame the missing POWs on the

Soviets, the contents of Soviet Archives that were opened to scholars following the end of the Cold War validated Bacque's thesis.

First-hand observers of post-war Germany had reported on the desperate state of the German population, whose official food ra-



James Bacque
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tions were at starvation level, leading to widespread malnutrition and illness. To make matters worse, the struggling local population had to contend with the influx of millions of ethnic Germans expelled from central and Eastern Europe. Based on information from various German censuses together with the recorded influx of huge numbers of German refugees, Bacque argued that the excess German civilian deaths during that period amounted to at least 10 million, and possibly millions more. The official Morgenthau Plan had envisioned the elimination of about 20 million Germans, and while it was later renounced by top American leaders, it seems to have been partially implemented. In 1997, Bacque followed *Other Losses* with *Crimes and Mercies*, which described how the starvation of German civilians and the expulsion of ethnic Germans from other parts of Europe were followed in 1946 by the efforts

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of concerned Americans and Canadians, led by Herbert Hoover and Mackenzie King, to relieve starvation with a food aid program.

Bacque's findings were first published in the magazine *Saturday Night* (under the editorship of John Fraser), and also by *Die Welt*

in Germany. The articles elicited "a tsunami of praise and thanks among millions of survivors," said Bacque, to such an extent that the editors stopped printing the letters and *Die Welt* asked its readers to stop writing. *Other Losses* quickly

became a best-seller, was praised by scholars and writers around the world, and received the endorsement of Col. Ernest F. Fisher, senior historian of the US Army.

However, despite favourable reviews in *Time* magazine and on Dan Rather's CBS News, *Other Losses* provoked much criticism and angered the powers that be. Bacque describes the campaign against him in his article

The Challenges of Bringing Truth, published in the Autumn, 2012, issue of *Humanist Perspectives*. Prior to the publication of that article, no Canadian editor or publisher had accepted any manuscript from Bacque in the 23 years following publication of *Other Losses*. (This was

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before my time with *Humanist Perspectives*, so I can take no credit.) A scathing review by Stephen Ambrose (founder of the Eisenhower Center in New Orleans, who admitted he had not researched the subject) in *The New York Times* deep-sixed the book in the US. Aside from a hit piece by the CBC, the media and literary publications maintained a stony silence on Bacque's books. Bacque was also subjected to harassment: documents he had ordered were stolen in the mail, he was blocked from accessing official archives, and his phone was bugged. No "free speech" organization answered his call for help; the Writers Union of Canada, PEN International, and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association all refused to take up his cause. The blacklisting of Bacque took a major financial toll, leading to his having to sell his home in Toronto and moving his family to a modest cottage in Penetanguishene.

Bacque had committed the unpardonable sin of challenging the official narrative. Although his research jived with the reports from the 1940s and 1950s on the post-war reality of Germany, the authors of those reports – including distinguished British naval officer Captain Russell Grenfell, British journalist Sisley Huddleston, American journalist Freda Utley, British publisher Victor Gollanz, and American author Ralph Franklin Keeling – had also been buried by the mainstream media and erased from historical memory. (See Ron Unz's article *American Pravda: Post-War France and Post-War Germany*, published online in the Unz Review of July 9, 2018.) Leading human rights lawyer Alfred de Zayas also took up the topic in the 1970s and 1980s with his books *Nemesis at Potsdam; A Terrible Revenge*; and *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau, 1939-1945*, all of which received scholarly praise and sold hundreds of thousands of copies in Germany and other parts of Europe, but were mostly ignored in the English-speaking world.

In the Spring, 2018, issue (#204) of *Human-*

ist Perspectives, de Zayas describes the *Historikerstreit* (dispute among historians) of Germany in the 1980s, in which the careers of historians who didn't adhere to the "official narrative" were destroyed and an academic *Gleichschaltung*

was imposed. De Zayas also describes the thuggish enforcement of the black-and-white narrative by Antifa, to whose violence the authorities mostly turned a blind eye. In that same issue, Bacque provides an anecdote about how even diligent scholars who knew the facts had erased certain details from their memory, and I raise the question in my editorial of whether Antifa are the brownshirts of our time.

The narrative that Bacque violated at such great cost to himself is simple: the Allies were good guys and always behaved honourably while the Germans – not just the Nazi ideologues but virtually the whole lot of them – were evil villains. The recognition that this view does not coincide with historical reality or human nature is in no way a denial of the genocidal evil of the Nazi ideology. To critically examine (or re-examine) the historical antecedents of the First and Second World Wars, wartime and postwar events, and the deeds – good and bad – of world leaders at the time, does not turn one into a Nazi apologist. But the treatment of Bacque and the literary and media cone of silence on "revisionists" of any sort suggest that questioning the narrative is tantamount to doing just that.

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a flawless hero – and a strong case can be made that heroes like Eisenhower and Winston Churchill also engaged in villainy. In our current age of "wokeness," things have arguably become worse. Anyone who flouts the progressive narrative (for example on "victims" and "oppressors") faces social ostracism, loss of employment, career death, and censorship through mainstream media blackout, suspension from social media, and deplatforming through pressure on venues to cancel, threats, academic mobbing and even physical violence.

Of course, the enforcement of any kind of “narrative” violates freedom of speech, one of the freedoms that we allegedly fought for in World War II. We should be grateful to Bacque and those like him who have the moral courage to challenge entrenched narratives when they

encounter contradictory information even if it incurs the wrath of the mighty.

James Bacque had a website, jamesbacque.com, which his wife Elisabeth continues to maintain. •

– Madeline Weld

Letter

Dale Branscombe (*Where are the Feminists?*, HP 210) replies to Sharon Hurd’s letter regarding his article (Issue 211)

Europe is in the midst of an existential crisis. Women are being attacked, raped and murdered on an unprecedented scale. Sweden, the most “feminist” of all countries, is in serious trouble. It has earned the title of “The Rape Capital of Europe” as a direct result of mass migration. Europe has invited in the most misogynistic

ideology on the planet. And it is coming our way. Feminists, male and female, claim to be for the protection of women. Some are. Yet many forget their priorities when religion is involved. Suddenly the fear of being labelled a racist trumps any concern (or pretense of concern) they might have had for women. We can’t have it both ways. We can polish our halos as we follow Europe down a rabbit hole to the seventh century, or we can take a stand for women. Please read *The Strange Death of Europe* by Douglas Murray.

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