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USA IN WWII

GOOD WARS IN US WARS? By Dick Bennett
OMNI has for seventeen years believed in preventing wars by advocating world peace through education, the arts and sciences, faith traditions, nonviolence, social and economic justice, human rights, mutual understanding, conflict resolution, diplomacy, negotiation, exchange programs. We have not promoted pacifism. That is, our advocacy has not been absolutist, but has depended upon the search for historical truth. Since some US wars might have been justified, study of US history has been an integral part of our program. We have tried to understand which of the many US wars and interventions could be justified. While US flag patriots have promoted the righteousness of all US wars in an expanding empire, we, and the peace movement in general, have tried to discover, through a careful reading of US history, how many regime overthrows, coups, interventions, invasions, and occupations were defensible.

Some recent books about this history include American Wars: Illusions and Realities edited by Paul Buchheit, that examines nineteen illusions leading the US to war, and Stephen Kinzer’s Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq, a study of the toppling of fourteen foreign governments. Earlier, two books by William Blum surveyed all of the US interventions since WWII: Killing Hope and Rogue State. “From 1945 to the end of the century, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to crush more than 30 populist-nationalist movements struggling against intolerable regimes” (Rogue State, first edition, p. 2). These books give us a history of the US as global bully. The peace movement opposed and opposes post-WWII US wars (invasions and interventions) because most, perhaps all, have been unnecessary, illegal, and immoral.

World War II is not included in these histories; it has been “the good war” that produced “the greatest generation.” However, recently US behavior in that war has received closer scrutiny. In Worshipping the Myths of World War II, Reflections on America’s Dedication to War, Edward Wood, Jr., examines four myths “that have masked the real nature of World War II and all our wars that followed” (p. x). Many articles and some books question the ethics and practical effectiveness of allied air war. The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of
Armageddon by Michael Sherry traces the development and horrendous consequences of indiscriminate bombing of cities by air war. A.C. Grayling’s Among the Dead Cities: The History and Moral Legacy of the WW II Bombing of Civilians in Germany and Japan denounces indiscriminate, “area” bombing. Keith Lowe’s Inferno 1943: the Fiery Destruction of Hamburg evokes the horrors of Hamburg’s destruction. John Dower’s War Without Mercy shows the similarities of US and Japanese bigotry and ferocity. And there are more.

But one book has a special importance for us on December 7. Roland Worth, Jr. in No Choice But War: The United States Embargo Against Japan and the Eruption of War in the Pacific (McFarland, 1995) finds much to blame in both countries for causing World War II in the Pacific. He expresses no sympathy for Japanese militarism, ruthless aggression, and mass killing. But he also shows “the pivotal role of the U.S.-led economic embargo in pushing Japan over the edge into overt hostilities against the West. In other words the U.S. decision to embargo 90 percent of Japan’s petroleum and two-thirds or more of its trade led directly to the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.” “It was not just a matter of Japanese imperialism; the misjudged American response [of total embargo] sealed off the possibility of a peaceful solution or even of “hot cold war” and pushed the Japanese “beyond the point of no return” (ix-x).

During the past two decades, the official, patriotic, illusory enthusiasm for US wars that led to more wars has received significant deflation. The US wars were not inevitable and as we have seen have been disastrous. You and I now have a well-substantiated history that can lead to peace. Our task on Pearl Harbor Day and on all war-making National DAYS (e.g., the replacement of Armistice Day by Veterans Day) is to make that history known to the next generations of young people.

Selected Dick’s Newsletters on US Invasions and Occupations include the following (additional newsletters for these topics are being prepared, and newsletters for others are available):

European Westward Conquest: N. America

European Westward Conquest: Pacific
World War I

World War II
Latin America
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2013/04/latin-america-newsletter-2.html

Korean War

Vietnam War
The seeds of American militarism spawned by the Second World War compel us to probe beneath the ‘good war’ moniker because it is the poster war that keeps war acceptable in our society.” Patricia Hynes. “The Bombing of Royan”

Because in 1941 President Roosevelt “feared that a call for intervention would have been defeated in Congress…, he adopted a strategy of provoking Germany and Japan into attacking the United States. He finally succeeded with Japan…” that had an alliance with Hitler (483). Thomas Fleming. The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I. Basic Books, 2003.

TEXTS
Publisher's Description: A war is always a moral event. However, the most destructive war in human history has not received much moral scrutiny. *The Good War That Wasn't--and Why It Matters* examines the moral legacy of this war, especially for the United States.

Drawing on the just war tradition and on moral values expressed in widely circulated statements of purpose for the war, the book asks: **How did American participation in the war fit with just cause and just conduct criteria?**

**Subsequently the book considers the impact of the war on American foreign policy in the years that followed. How did American actions cohere (or not) with the stated purposes for the war, especially self-determination for the peoples of the world and disarmament?**

**Finally, the book looks at the witness of war opponents. Values expressed by war advocates were not actually furthered by the war. However, many war opponents did inspire efforts that effectively worked toward the goals of disarmament and self-determination.**

*The Good War That Wasn't--and Why It Matters* develops its arguments in pragmatic terms. It focuses on moral reasoning in a commonsense way in its challenge to widely held assumptions about World War II.

**Endorsements & Reviews**

"Military spending, as Eisenhower warned, generates wars. Myths about World War II generate military spending. World War II has been propping up military spending through decades of wars openly acknowledged as disasters. This book exposes World War II as a crisis that need not have been created and could have been handled otherwise. That understanding should save the U.S. about $1 trillion a year and a great many people their lives." --David Swanson, author of *War Is a Lie*

"Ethicist Ted Grimsrud asks us to look past the romanticism, the myth-making, and the nostalgia that have grown up around the Second World War and make a clear-eyed appraisal of the conflict's real costs. Employing classic just war theory, Grimsrud shows how the U.S. war effort fell far short of that theory's minimal criteria. Then, drawing on the insights of Christian pacifism, he proposes alternatives--applicable then and now--for building communities of resistance that treat all life as precious." --Steven M. Nolt, author of *Seeking Places of Peace*

**Contributors**

PACIFIC THEATER
Michella Marino review of Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash, eds. 'The United States and the Second World War: New Perspectives on Diplomacy, War, and the Home Front'

Publishers Description: … Offering a topic for almost any scholar interested in the American war experience, the essays broadly span the origins and conclusion of World War II, the home front, the military at war, oral history and the experience of the individual soldier, and the peace movement. More specifically, the essays cover the following topics: the U.S. Navy’s convoying of merchant ships in 1941, American containment of Japanese expansion prior to Pearl Harbor, the Office of War Information’s role in postwar foreign policy, the sexual morality and fidelity of American military wives during wartime, the defense and criticism of the Sherman tank, how lessons from the Mediterranean amphibious assaults led to the navy’s success on D-day, the importance of the army’s usage of oral history in documenting the war effort, the role of the U.S. Coast Guard in overseas amphibious operations, the wartime reactions and contributions of both secular and religious pacifists, the national and international discussion and debate over the postwar occupation of Japan, and the influence antinuclear activists wielded in molding public memory of the dropping of the atomic bombs. . . .

One of the major strengths of the book lies in its reexamination of well-worn topics, such as women’s roles on the home front or America’s responsibility in instigating the war with Japan. For instance, Pash’s essay “Containment, Rollback, and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1933-1941” provides a fascinating look into the gamble the Japanese took in declaring war on Russia in 1904 and their similar gamble in declaring war on the United States four decades later. Japan’s second attempt to defeat a much larger nation ended in a drastically different outcome. Using terms most often associated with the Cold War era, Pash shows how the American policy shift from one of containment to rollback

“[A]n impressive achievement: a boot-level take on the conflict that is fresh without being cynically revisionist.” —The New Republic
TWO VIEWS OF JAPANESE SURRENDER: RICHARD FRANK’S *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* and TSUYOSHI HASEGAWA’S *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan*. 

Frank offers the traditional explanation of the atomic bomb decision as necessary to end the war; Hasegawa the revisionist position of the bomb to prohibit the Russians from advancing eastward.

This comparative review sides with Frank: Racing the Enemy - Boston University, www.bu.edu/historic/hs/kort.html.


*Racing the Enemy — Tsuyoshi Hasegawa | Harvard University Press*  
www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674022416

*Hasegawa* rewrites the standard history of the end of World War II in the Pacific by fully integrating the three key actors in the story--the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan.

WWII JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT CAMPS MUSEUM, MCGEHEE, AR: COLLAPSE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES DURING WAR

VISIT BY DICK BENNETT AND PAT SNYDER AUGUST 30, 2013, by Dick Bennett

Pat Snyder drove us from Maumelle, AR to McGehee, AR and the Japanese-American Internment Camp Museum, titled the “Jerome-Rohwer Interpretive Museum and Visitor Center,” and at Rohwer the National Historic Landmark where one of the two camps once spread out over the corn and cotton fields. The last hour of our trip took us through mile after mile of cotton, milo, and soya fields of southeast Arkansas, once included in the South’s “Black Belt”. The morning was already hot and dry, and many abandoned buildings and meager houses evoked impoverishment. But so long as the aquifer still produced the water essential to the economy of the entire area, the people could hang on, and a few could become rich.

McGehee, a few miles off the interstate, looked baked. A little town of about 6,000, it gathered all the little businesses that serviced the agricultural economy. Its small size and apparent lack of wealth, and my recollection of the animosity in the US during WWII against “Japs” made McGehee an unlikely place for an idealistic social project like a museum to
remember the Japanese-Americans who had been housed in two camps a few miles north and south of the town. I was prepared for an incompetent, shabby installation of a biased history.

We turned into the street and encountered a modest but attractive sign surrounded by a well-tended flower-garden. And then we saw the building, the old train station given to the city for the museum. This was the first of the many contributions we were to discover that had made the project possible. A new roof, new large sign, fresh paint--the building seemed to offer a confident welcome to visitors.

Inside the door I thought I had entered another world from the one outside. The office portal to the museum display greeted us with attractive colors and display cases of books and selected artifacts. And the curator, Susan Gallion, welcomed us eagerly, for only a few persons had visited that day. She was ready to give us a guided tour in two meanings: she had the time and she was informed about the museum’s contents.

The museum produced the same surprise as did the building: it had clearly been designed and assembled by a professional curator who knew how to design a complex display and who knew and reported the historical facts. Gone were the anti-“Jap” feelings of WWII; in every display compassion for the Japanese-American victims of injustice was palpable, for the explanation of the injustice was set forth calmly and clearly but emphatically.

Afterward we visited the remains of the Rohwer camp. For as far as we could see, where the camp had been is now covered with crops, except for the camp cemetery. Here we found in roughly chronological order the graves of the Japanese-Americans who died there. In front had been added an obelisk and symbolical tank in honor of the Japanese-American soldiers who fought in Italy and France against Hitler during WWII. All needed repair, and in fact a sign announced that repairs were to occur in the summer of 2013, though the work had not yet begun by late August.

We headed back to Maumelle on Highway 65 at Dumas. We had seen a significant museum, which will gradually become known to the people of Arkansas, the nation, and the world. Ms. Gallion wrote to me September 15: “We now have hit 3 countries: United Kingdom, Canada, and Japan! And, have had close to 1650 visitors!”

The truth is told here about a great injustice committed by our government against a group of innocent citizens and about a great injury to our Constitution whose Bill of Rights was intended to prevent such injustices. Our completely innocent West-coast Japanese-American citizens, on account of the racism and the fear and panic by leaders and public alike following Pearl Harbor, were judged guilty by association, uprooted from their homes in a military operation, and transported more than half-way across the country to alien Arkansas most of whose citizens were hostile, and forced to live in hastily assembled barracks for two years. Yet now in the little town of McGehee, a museum shines a bright light of constitutional truth for a wiser future.
WAR IN EUROPE


Publisher’s Summary:  A groundbreaking history of ordinary soldiers struggling on the front lines, *The Deserters* offers a completely new perspective on the Second World War. Charles Glass—renowned journalist and author of the critically acclaimed *Americans in Paris: Life and Death Under Nazi Occupation*—delves deep into army archives, personal diaries, court-martial records, and self-published memoirs to produce this dramatic and heartbreaking portrait of men overlooked by their commanders and ignored by history.

Surveying the 150,000 American and British soldiers known to have deserted in the European Theater, *The Deserters: A Hidden History of World War II* tells the life stories of three soldiers who abandoned their posts in France, Italy, and Africa. Their deeds form the backbone of Glass’s arresting portrait of soldiers pushed to the breaking point, a sweeping reexamination of the conditions for ordinary soldiers.

With the grace and pace of a novel, *The Deserters* moves beyond the false extremes of courage and cowardice to reveal the true experience of the frontline soldier. Glass shares the story of men like Private Alfred Whitehead, a Tennessee farm boy who earned Silver and Bronze Stars for bravery in Normandy—yet became a gangster in liberated Paris, robbing Allied supply depots along with ordinary citizens. Here also is the story of British men like Private John Bain, who deserted three times but never fled from combat—and who endured battles in North Africa and northern France before German machine guns cut his legs from under him. The heart of *The Deserters* resides with men like Private Steve Weiss, an idealistic teenage volunteer from Brooklyn who forced his father—a disillusioned First World War veteran—to sign his enlistment papers because he was not yet eighteen. On the Anzio beachhead and in the Ardennes forest, as an infantryman with the 36th Division and as an accidental partisan in the French Resistance, Weiss lost his illusions about the nobility of conflict and the infallibility of American commanders.

Far from the bright picture found in propaganda and nostalgia, the Second World War was a grim and brutal affair, a long and lonely effort that has never been fully reported—to the detriment of those who served and the danger of those nurtured on false tales today.
Revealing the true costs of conflict on those forced to fight, *The Deserters* is an elegant and unforgettable story of ordinary men desperately struggling in extraordinary times.

“**Powerful and often startling**… *The Deserters* offers a **provokingly fresh** angle on this most studied of conflicts… This is a stripped down, unromanticized, intimate history of battle in all of its confusion, chaos, terror, and moral ambiguity. **Intricately structured — the author deftly juggles three narrative strands — and beautifully paced to build suspense**, this tightly focused account, which draws on memoirs, archives, police files, psychiatric records, is neither reverent nor disapproving.” — *The Boston Globe*

“Glass is to be commended for his take on WWII through the eyes of those who ran away from it… Glass’s history might be one of the best ways of relaying the experience of war: through the eyes of the young men who charged into the line of fire, gave up the ghost, and whose only reward was living to tell the tale.” — *Publishers Weekly* (STARRED REVIEW)

“The Deserters: A Hidden History of World War II, by the historian and former ABC News foreign correspondent Charles Glass, thus performs a service. It’s the first book to examine at length the sensitive topic of desertions during this war, and the facts it presents are frequently revealing and heartbreaking… *The Deserters* has much to say about soldiers’ hearts. It underscores the truth of the following observation, made by a World War II infantry captain named Charles B. MacDonald: 'It is always an enriching experience to write about the American soldier in adversity no less than in glittering triumph.'” — *Dwight Garner, The New York Times*

PBS, AETN

**Nazi Mega Weapons: Atlantic Wall**

Part I, Wednesday, July 17 at 10:00 p.m., 2013

In a quest for world domination, the Nazis built some of the biggest and deadliest pieces of military hardware and malevolent technology in history.

The new three-part series, "Nazi Mega Weapons," recounts Germany’s engagement in World War II from a unique perspective, uncovering the engineering secrets of iconic megastructures, telling the stories of the engineers who designed them and revealing how these structures sparked a technological revolution that changed warfare forever.

In part one, learn about the greatest fortification project of the 20th century, Hitler’s Atlantic Wall.
To protect occupied Europe from an Allied invasion, Hitler demanded the construction of a defensive wall stretching thousands of kilometers from France in the south to Norway in the north. This is the story of the vast engineering project that faced its ultimate test on D-Day.

**Pictured:** A scene from "Nazi Mega Weapons: Atlantic Wall."

**THE REAL THEME of THE NAZI “ATLANTIC WALL”? by Dick Bennett**

PBS misnamed their July 17 program. Or perhaps inadvertently it turned out not to be primarily about Nazi “mega-weapons.” Counting minutes devoted to topics, the film tells the story of the construction of the defenses erected along the coasts of France, Belgium, and Holland under the direction of the great German General Rommel, himself reporting directly to Hitler. But it has two powerful sub-themes perhaps prominent only to all who seek new ways of thinking that might prevent or reduce wars and the ferocity of wars. In these perspectives it is a peace film.

Let’s rename it “D-Day from the German Perspective.” And the German is not Hitler, who is barely portrayed, and not General Rommel, impressive as he is. Nor is D-Day the *Band of Brothers* of heroic and magnanimous US soldiers versus a powerful German army and one treacherous German soldier, but the opposite: an ordinary German soldier defending his country from invasion and a defense failed not because of lack of courage or character, but simply lack of ammunition.

That’s a rare perspective: the enemy as a human being just like us. The single soldier we encounter throughout the film is named and gains a presence as a soldier doing his duty following orders just as did our soldiers. We see him anxious over the unknown invasion locations and dates, surviving the horrendous bombardment from the invading ships, shooting point-blank at the waves of US soldiers first with his machine gun, and then, when he ran out of ammunition, firing his rifle until shot in the hand, and then retreating from his bunker to fight again.

In this climax of the single soldier’s story lies the mega-theme: he ran out of machine-gun ammunition. Despite years of preparation, for several reasons (troop and financial demands from the Eastern Front, the number of US troops thrown onto the beaches)—Hitler and Rommel were not ready: they stockpiled too little ammunition. Thousands of US soldiers were killed during that D-Day landing, and it might have been futile, the film suggests, had the machine guns not been silenced by lack of bullets. D-Day was not triumphal for either enemy.

Historian William Hitchcock examines the liberation of Europe in World War II from the point of view of the Europeans, casting a new light on their world and ours.

Find out more about William Hitchcock Find out more about The Bitter Road to Freedom
Liberation: The Bitter Road to Freedom: The Human Cost of Allied Victory in World War II Europe by William I Hitchcock

- Review by Emily Stokes, The Observer, Saturday 12 September 2009.

Liberation: The Bitter Road to Freedom, Europe 1944-1945 by William I. Hitchcock

Readers today know that attempts to end tyranny invariably bring atrocities of their own. But still, for many the word "liberation" summons images of US soldiers handing out Hershey's to grateful French civilians. Hitchcock's remarkable history revisits the period 1944-45, giving voice to those who discovered that the behaviour of British, American and Russian liberators was seldom as virtuous as the cause for which they fought. Hitchcock is a fine storyteller and a skilful editor, choosing memorable and often disturbing examples: a lone white ox is eaten alive by starving Berliners; Glasgow Highlanders are billeted with a Belgian family still mourning the loss of sons killed not by the enemy, but by an RAF bomb.

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END WWII NEWSLETTER #2

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Dick Bennett
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