

FEEDBACK / A controversial author replies to criticism of his charge that the Allies caused the deaths of German war prisoners

Zeal to defend Eisenhower leads 'far from the truth'

BY JAMES BACQUE

THE CBC's *fifth estate* recently dragged a red gefilte fish across the trail of history, and the usually cautious *Globe and Mail* followed the scent.

An April 30 story in *The Globe* reported on the *fifth estate's* examination of my book, *Other Losses*, which was broadcast that evening. The story focused on what amounted to the show's defence of General Dwight Eisenhower against my accusation that he and General Charles de Gaulle presided over the deaths of a million German prisoners of war. Strangely, the show also spent much time defending Jews against historical revisionists, who demean the Holocaust by challenging its statistics.

Jews need no defence against me, of course, but they got it anyway. It was suggested that I have sought comfort from revisionists because no one else will support me. This is laughable. *Saturday Night* magazine, three major CBC radio shows and dozens of academics, newspapers and critics around the world have published or favourably reviewed *Other Losses*.

Fifth estate host Linden MacIntyre knew that I had turned down lucrative offers to address revisionist groups in the United States, Canada and Germany. Yet the face of a self-confessed American anti-Semite was flashed on the screen in an effort to make viewers think he was my friend. That was irrelevant and untrue.

Indeed, the U.S. and French editions of *Other Losses*, as well as the passages printed in *Saturday Night*, included "poison pill" notes from the publishers specifically designed to warn revisionists against using the book to diminish Nazi crimes. This information was kept from viewers.

As for my own prejudice, it is hardly a secret. Consider this passage from my latest book, *Just Raoul*: "Germany . . . That was a name I hated and feared . . . Now I was forced to go to Germany or else allow my prejudice to overcome the obvious need to do research there. In fascinated distaste, I crossed the Rhine to Bonn."

So, while one-third of the *fifth estate* program hinted at my supposed bias against Jews, this statement of my prejudice against Germans, the most important people in my book because they were the victims of the PoW camps, was excluded.

Following this fishy line, *The Globe* report repeated the *fifth estate's* incorrect contention that I had based some of the new U.S. edition of my book on an "imaginary" interview with a former U.S. prison camp guard named Johnny Foster.

I did no such thing. After the book first appeared in Canada in 1989, I interviewed Mr. Foster twice for an epilogue to the U.S. edition. I included his comments — which supported my case — in a trial draft that I gave to the *fifth estate* with a strong warning that it was an uncorrected proof copy, not for publication or broadcast. I then discovered, a matter of weeks before the publication date, that Mr. Foster was denying what he had told me. So I took him out of the epilogue before the book went to press.

I told the *fifth estate* twice that I had eli-

minated the Foster material but it went ahead and broadcast him reading from the uncorrected proof, and then saying "That's a lie." Mr. MacIntyre also said this material was in the U.S. edition. Amazing.

Actually, my problems with the *fifth estate* began months ago, when people associated with the show began making misleading statements about me to important supporters of my work. In early January, *fifth estate* researcher Andrew Mitrovia implied to Anthony Miller, a University of Toronto epidemiologist who provided me with expert assistance on statistics, that I was withholding essential information from Prof. Miller. If believed, this statement would destroy his trust in me, as well as that of my publishers and readers in seven countries. It was not true.

Producer Neil Docherty later admitted to me and to Prof. Miller that he was "ticked off" at this and had "spoken to" Mr. Mitrovia about it. But then they went ahead and repeated the Johnny Foster story to *Saturday Night* editor John Fraser, whose magazine had published an excerpt from *Other Losses*. Even so, Mr. Fraser defended me and my book in an interview the *fifth estate* did not use.

The low point of these sad proceedings was reached in the show's interview with Ernest F. Fisher, a war hero and U.S. army historian with a shining reputation, who had written the foreword to my book.

I sent Mr. MacIntyre and Dr. Fisher copies of my new epilogue, containing vital evidence that the U.S. army is trying to cover up the mass deaths by pretending that many "other losses" were prisoners released without formal discharge papers or transferred to camps in other countries.

The new epilogue disproves both claims, but did not reach Dr. Fisher before he was interviewed by Mr. MacIntyre, who neither gave him a copy of it nor hinted at its contents. This led Dr. Fisher to question the controversial statistics in the book, but when he finally saw the epilogue, he wrote to Mr. MacIntyre, saying, "I am upset that you did not show Bacque's epilogue to me before the interview. After reading [it], I have decided to request that you delete my remark [on the death tally]. I have now concluded there is no reason to change anything in my foreword to *Other Losses*."

Yet the damaging part of the interview was aired with only the merest acknowledgement that Dr. Fisher had changed his mind. "The CBC people hinted darkly at anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi and revisionist associations among me, Bacque and others," he said later. "In some respects, this interview was worse than the Battle of Bastogne [in which he fought the Germans' last-ditch attempt to reverse the course of the war]."

In the end, its zeal to defend Eisenhower and, for some reason, Jews against me led the people at the *fifth estate* far from the truth. It is time they owned up to their mistakes and apologized.

James Bacque is a Toronto writer. The U.S. edition of his book, *Other Losses*, has just been published by Prima.

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