

<Book Review>

**Summer, 1945: Germany, Japan and the Harvest of Hate**

Thomas Goodrich

*The Palms Press, 2018*

Reviewed by Tadashi Hama

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“We ought to get rid of them as soon as possible.”

“Kill them all, men, old men, children and women, after you have amused yourself with them!”

“We knew we had to kill a lot of women and kids... Had to be done.”

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Thomas Goodrich has authored a number of books with a theme that is not for the squeamish: atrocities as inevitable products of human conflict. In his previous work on the American Indian Wars, *Scalp Dance*, (Stackpole Books, 2002) he documented the blow-for-blow torture and slaughter between the Indians and whites. What gives Goodrich’s books its visceral realism is that he cites from diaries and personal recollections, allowing both perpetrators and survivors to freely express themselves. There is no place for sentimentality in Goodrich’s historical narratives. Certainly, those of us raised in today’s “civilized” and “enlightened” times will wince upon reading of the whites’ raw hatred of the Indians, and will likewise wince on reading the current book.

The Second World War, the subject of Goodrich’s latest book, is indeed viewed with much sentimentality by those who did not have to fight and by those born long after the end of the war. The modern view of war contrasts with the strong anti-war sentiment of an overwhelming majority of Americans in the late 1930s and early 1940s, who remembered the senseless carnage of the previous European war that was fought to make the world “safe for democracy”. Nonetheless, following Pearl Harbor, the political establishment, with support from the mass media, sent America’s young men to fight and die in the Pacific and in Europe to once again save the world for democracy.<sup>1</sup> The dominant narrative during and long after the war is that the Allies, namely, the US, Britain and Soviet Russia, fought and defeated fascism and all that fascism entailed.

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<sup>1</sup> Further historical details of the complete turnaround in public thinking and US policy may be found in Barnes, H. E. (1953). *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers. The Roosevelt Administration did all it could to silence and marginalize anti-war dissenters, e.g. Duffy, J.P. (2010). *Lindbergh vs. Roosevelt*. NY, NY: MJF Books; Hoover, H. (ed. Nash, G.H.) (2011). *Freedom Betrayed*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press.

The voices of the defeated, no matter how brave or determined they were, are crushed by those of the victors—it is the victors that write history and dictate the fate of the losers. “Seldom,” Goodrich points out, “does one here about the crimes against the Germans or the crimes against the Japanese, of the deliberate firebombing of millions of German and Japanese women and children, of the wholesale rape of countless women and children, of the utter and abject subservience that both nations even today still find themselves locked in.”

Former American journalist Tom Brokaw dutifully echoed the official narrative, the politically correct view, of the Second World War in his book, *The Greatest Generation Speaks* (Random House, 2001): “They answered the call to help save the world from the two most powerful and ruthless military machines ever assembled, instruments of conquest in the hands of fascist maniacs... when the war was over, the men and women who had been involved, in uniform and in civilian capacities, joined in joyous and short-lived celebrations... They stayed true to their values of personal responsibility, duty, honor and faith.” In the sanitized official narrative of the Second World War depicted by Brokaw and his colleagues, Allied soldiers, to paraphrase Harry Truman, “restored freedom” and “cleansed” the world of “evil”. Because Allied soldiers fought for “freedom”, it is unimaginable that they could have murdered prisoners of war or raped civilians. Upholding the official narrative is not only willful neglect of real history but also approval of a distorted history and allows one to believe that all one needs to go to war is a righteous cause or having “God on our side”. This thinking sets the stage for more wars and endless suffering.

Given the pervasiveness of the official narrative and the thoroughness of war time censorship, one would reflexively ascribe the calls for death found at the beginning of this review, found in the current book, to the “evil” and “fascist” Germans and Japanese. It will come as a surprise to those with historical blinders that these quotes were made by the Allies, by those who were fighting in the name of democracy. The first was made by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, on sending Soviet prisoners of war captured by the Germans back to the Soviet Union—he knew that they faced slave labor and certain death. The second quote was made by Soviet Journalist Ilya Ehrenburg, espousing his death-wish for the annihilation of the German people. The final quote is by Army Air Force General Curtis LeMay on his assessment of the March 1945 firebombing of Tokyo, in which civilians were “scorched and baked and broiled to death.”

“Our boys” fought Germans, racially and culturally similar to white Americans, nonetheless despised by the American political and military establishment, including Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman and Supreme Allied Commander in Europe Gen. Dwight Eisenhower. Long before the German military capitulated on May 8, 1945, the Allies murdered both prisoners of war and civilians. Official German capitulation did not halt the denigration of Germans. Those who were unfortunate enough to be taken prisoner were locked up in sprawling open-air latrines that doubled as concentration camps where many starved to death. Those captured and incarcerated by

the “gallant soldiers of the Red Army” were repeatedly tortured until they either died or confessed to committing entirely imaginary crimes.<sup>2</sup>

Why have most Americans not heard of the horrid behavior of “our boys”? Throughout the period after the Germans laid down their weapons, Goodrich points out that the US government imposed censorship. It told the media to “deify” their friends and “vilify” their enemies—stories of “looting, rape and murder”<sup>3</sup> were not to reach Americans back home. Goodrich states that the press was “transformed into an obedient herd of propagandist.” If reports of abuse made it into the mainstream media, US officials and Gen. Eisenhower quickly denied any wrong doing by Americans and cast blame on the Germans. It should not be surprising that people today, who are very familiar with US history, are vociferously skeptical when America announces that it is engaging in another war for the good of “freedom” and “democracy”.

A key differentiation of the current book from others in its class is that it highlights the particularly rabid hatred by white Americans of the “devious” and alien Japanese people. Goodrich writes that the “The job of demonizing the Japanese was simple.” The Japanese were viewed as vermin and the book notes that “bug sprays” and “rat traps” were “advertised as great ways to kill ‘insects, rodents and Japs.’”<sup>4</sup> The current book details Americans shooting surrendering Japanese soldiers and civilians alike—as if there were “vermin”. In fact, the current book points out that the men were ordered not to take prisoners. Goodrich does not attempt to minimize white Americans brutality by showing how equally “racist” the Japanese were, as other have done (e.g. John Dower, *War without Mercy* (Pantheon Books, 1986)). Japanese “racism”, Dower and others suggest, is somehow the same as or more horrid than American soldiers mutilating Japanese wounded as well as corpses for body parts, sending them back home to loved ones. Despite a Joint Chiefs of Staff directive in January 1944 prohibiting making war trophies out of Japanese body parts, in June, President Roosevelt graciously accepted a letter opener made from the arm bone of a Japanese soldier.<sup>5</sup>

What is one to make of the eager “hunting” of Japanese soldiers, or “dirty animals” by white American soldiers? It could be that their low educational attainment at that time made them susceptible to government propaganda. A literate American was defined as

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<sup>2</sup> Detailed histories of the imprisonment and torture of prisoners in the Communist bloc long after Germany surrendered can be found in Sack, J. (1993). *An Eye for an Eye*. NY, NY: Basic Books and MacDonogh, G. (2007). *After the Reich*. NY, NY: Basic Books.

<sup>3</sup> Further details of American excesses in “liberated” Europe can be found in Hitchcock, W. (2009). *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, (NY, NY: Free Press).

<sup>4</sup> United States government publications showed the Japanese as hideous beasts. An informational booklet published by the US War Department on the Japanese army stated that “most Japanese soldiers are of peasant stock.” (*Soldier’s Guide to the Japanese Army*, Military Intelligence Service, November 15, 1944.) Even popular children’s book author Theodore Geisel (“Dr. Seuss”) offered his skills to the war effort, depicting Japanese Americans as saboteurs and the Japanese as monsters:  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5020743/Shocking-WWII-propaganda-pamphlet-spotting-Jap.html>; <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/photos/galleries/2015/mar/06/dr-seuss/>

<sup>5</sup> Weingarten, J.J. (1992). The trophies of war. *The Pacific Historical Review* 61: 53-67.

one who could read and understand English at the fourth grade level.<sup>6</sup> Prior to Pearl Harbor, over 347,000 men of draft age were unable to sign their own name on their Selective Service Registration cards. A survey found that World War II veterans had about “11 years of schooling but no high school diploma.”<sup>7</sup> However, one could also surmise that white American hatred of the Japanese was not merely a Pavlovian response to media prompting, but something that lurked deep within the American psyche. In Brokaw’s *The Greatest Generation Speaks*, the word “Jap” appears only three times, somewhat surprising given the fact that letters from “Jap hunting” American soldiers stationed in the Pacific were included in his book. Nonetheless, in the one of the three instances, late Senator and Medal of Honor winner Daniel Inouye recalled the time after the war he was called a “Jap”, despite being dressed in his US Army officer’s uniform and the loss of his right arm, and denied service by a barber in Oakland, California.

*Summer, 1945* is unflinching in detailing the effects of war on combatants and civilians, from the “peacetime”, post-war torture and imprisonment of Germans in Allies prisons and concentration camps to the fire bombings of civilians in defenseless Japanese cities. The ultimate human horror, surviving a nuclear attack, rightly makes its appearance as well. Given the horrors unleashed by the Allies, readers will reflect on the relevance of the so-called war crimes trials held at the end of the war, as Goodrich does. Those who are comfortably ensconced in the official fairy tale of the Second World War will do well to ignore this book. However, Goodrich’s latest book is sure to enlighten those who seek historical truth. The gap between truth and myth is great—Edgar Jones, an American veteran of the European and Pacific Theaters, cited by Goodrich, asks a rhetorical question: “What kind of war do civilians suppose we fought anyway?”

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<sup>6</sup> Frey, M. (2015). Education, classification, and military strength: a look at the development of the US Army during World War II. [https://history.army.mil/events/ahts2015/presentations/seminar6/sem6\\_MarkFry\\_text\\_ImpactOfEdLevels.pdf](https://history.army.mil/events/ahts2015/presentations/seminar6/sem6_MarkFry_text_ImpactOfEdLevels.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Light, P.D. (1998). *Marching Upward*, Thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.