

RCAF, added that the film "makes many errors, some of omission - the lack of context - some of commission..."<sup>(10)</sup> And Martin Middlebrook, perhaps the foremost authority on Bomber Command, informed the Sub-Committee that it "was a gross distortion of the very complex subject which was Bomber Command's war over a period of six years."<sup>(11)</sup> Even Dr. Stephen Harris of the Department of National Defence, while acknowledging the claim that "for much of the war, Bomber Command spent much of its time bombing residential parts of German cities," admitted that there are some "major" errors in the film.<sup>(12)</sup>

The remainder of this chapter will examine some of the contentious issues in *Death by Moonlight* and assess the views expressed by witnesses before the Sub-Committee.

## WHY AREA BOMBING?

The central focus of *Death by Moonlight* is the policy of area bombing, adopted in February 1942 by Bomber Command in an attempt to destroy Germany's cities and its capability to wage war. According to the film-makers, this was a "secret plan," whose real aim was "to intentionally kill civilians" with a view to breaking the morale of the population.<sup>(13)</sup> Few Canadian airmen, the viewer is told, would ever learn of the plan, as they would be misled by their superiors into believing that the bombing targets remained German factories and military installations, not the built-up areas of cities. Not even the Canadian Government was consulted.

The debate over the aims of area bombing remains controversial. However, as numerous witnesses pointed out to the Sub-Committee, no intelligent debate is even possible unless the context of the policy is properly explained. According to many, this was never done in *Death by Moonlight*.

It is stated in the film that "in the first four years of the war, Bomber Command seldom tried precision strikes against key industrial targets."<sup>(14)</sup> Historians and veterans alike informed the Sub-Committee that nothing could be further from the truth. One of the earliest goals of the bomber offensive was to destroy specific military industrial targets, and this goal was actively pursued for the first two years of the war. However, it had become apparent by the summer

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(10) Proceedings, 6:11.

(11) Martin Middlebrook to Vincent Rigby, Sub-Committee Researcher, 26 October 1992.

(12) Proceedings, 3:52. Even those historians the film-makers cite as supporters of *Death by Moonlight*, such as Max Hastings and John Keegan, apparently had serious reservations. See, for example, Mr. Keegan's comments in the *Gazette*, 12 November 1992. See also Mr. Hastings' observations in "Comments on November 10 Galafilm Response to Ombudsman Report," p. 5, 11 passim.

(13) *The Valour and the Horror*, Post-Production Script, *Death by Moonlight: Bomber Command*, p. 27.

(14) Post-Production Script, *Death by Moonlight*, p. 19.