

BULLET-PROOF RESEARCH?

In addition to perceived distortions and questionable interpretations, a number of factual errors were brought to the attention of the Sub-Committee. A few examples will suffice.

Half the Queen's Own Rifles did not "lay wounded or dead" on the Normandy beaches; out of a regiment of 900, 145 were actually wounded or killed. Kurt Meyer did not command the 12th SS Division on 7 June; he commanded one of its regiments. On the eve of Operation Spring, a single German armoured division did not hold back a huge American army; rather, the entire German 7th Army was facing the Americans. Simonds did not take over command of the First Canadian Army from the British in July 1944; he activated Second Canadian Corps Headquarters in France. The Canadians did not eventually push the Hitler Youth off Verrières Ridge; the 12th SS was nowhere near Verrières. The visuals of mine shafts that were used by the Germans during Operation Spring are in fact shots of the German Siegfried line taken early in the war. And in the dramatic scenes, Simonds is shown wearing the red patch of the 1st Division when it should have been the dark blue insignia of the 2nd Canadian Corps. Likewise, Keller is incorrectly shown wearing the 1st Division shoulder patch instead of the 3rd. Small errors perhaps, but as some of our witnesses mused, acceptable for a \$3 million production?

CONCLUSIONS

It is the Sub-Committee's opinion that *In Desperate Battle* is plagued with many of the same problems that afflict *Death by Moonlight*. Once again, the film suffers from a grievous lack of balance. As Colonel English and Professor Copp (both of whom were approached by the film-makers during production) testified, the writers were only interested in uncovering material that would develop their personal interpretation of the war. They omit and distort any evidence which might contradict their thesis that the Canadian army was poorly trained, poorly led and capable of war atrocities no different from those committed by the enemy. Through the use of hindsight, they pass judgement with the greatest of ease. They seek out villains - this time Guy Simonds and Rod Keller - who, with the help of drama sequences, become little more than caricatures. In the film-makers' haste to condemn war, they fail to understand its complexities. The result is a production that is aimed more to shock than to inform.

Taking into consideration the film's serious factual errors as well, one can only conclude that *In Desperate Battle*, like *Death by Moonlight*, is not really a documentary at all but a personal interpretation. The writers' conclusions may in places be supported by the evidence, but so many rules are broken along the way that the film's credibility is seriously undermined. The result of their labours is to demean the efforts of veterans and distort a critical period in our history.