

MORALITY IN WAR

According to German records, the bomber offensive killed about 600,000 Germans and seriously wounded many more. For some, the deaths of "innocent" civilians, including women and children, present a serious moral dilemma. In *Death by Moonlight*, the issue is black and white. The words of Freeman Dyson, an operational researcher with the Air Ministry during the war, are carefully chosen. The German night fighters, he argued, "ended the war morally undefeated... We had given them, at the end of the war, the one thing they lacked at the beginning, a clean cause to fight for."⁽²⁶⁾

Many veterans appearing before the Sub-Committee found these words deeply disturbing. More than one suggested that using contemporary moral attitudes to pass judgement on events that happened fifty years ago was suspect at best.⁽²⁷⁾ Given the stated aims of Hitler's Germany, and the barbaric acts that it committed during the war, including the devastation wrought by the Luftwaffe on British cities during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz (not to mention Warsaw and Rotterdam), few airmen worried about the moral implications of area bombing. The Honourable J.R. Barr stated that "we could not see that high, moral ground from 20,000 feet. It was covered with smoke - smoke from the gas chimneys and the death camps."⁽²⁸⁾ As for the Luftwaffe, whether "morally undefeated" or not, there is no mention that by the end of the war the German air force was all but spent and could not fight back against Allied bombers.

The film's depiction of German civilians as "innocent" left many witnesses contemplating whether the film-makers understood the concept of total war. Professor Carter pointed out that:

A major error made by the film was the assumption that German civilians were innocent; that is, they were not involved in the war effort, that they were somehow detached from the Nazi regime and were nothing more than innocent bystanders. This is simply not correct. Civilians in Nazi Germany during the war joined the

(26) Post-Production Script, *Death by Moonlight*, p. 40. Many witnesses found the portrayal of Freeman Dyson misleading. An operational researcher at Bomber Command headquarters, he is described by the film-makers as a "brilliant analyst" of the bomber campaign. However, he was only 15 at the outbreak of war, yet he is portrayed by an actor who is much older. Moreover, he never held a senior position at Bomber Command headquarters and as a noted pacifist his views should be treated carefully. See the testimony of Honourable J.R. Barr, Proceedings, 7:65-66.

(27) Professor (ret'd) Rodney, Proceedings, 6:25.

(28) Proceedings, 7:75.