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Review of *The Price of Truth: The Journalist who Defied Military Censors to Report the Fall of Nazi Germany* by Andrew Fine

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BOOK REVIEWS

This reviewer is not a fan of counter-factual history but nevertheless the author makes some interesting points when ruminating over what might have happened had the II SS Panzer Korps not been split up and its' effectiveness diluted after the 17th of July - particularly in bolstering the defence of Kharkov or prosecuting an effective counterattack to pre-empt such a threat. As he says, 'a fully operational and complete II SS Panzer Korps (including the *Liebstandarte*) in the hands of Manstein would have been a fearsome prospect'.

It is perhaps indicative of the range of sources used and the depth of research, that 132 pages are given over to the bibliography, appendices and notes. Aside from increasing the veracity of the authors' conclusions, this additional material is a rich reference source for anyone with an appetite to investigate this topic further. The large number of high-quality aerial photographs which are included, along with contemporary images sourced from Google Earth, bring another dimension to the analysis - and they also serve to remind the reader that many brave tank crews paid the ultimate price during this epic battle. It is often said that history is a matter of interpretation. However, this is one instance where the facts speak for themselves, and the author of this study should be commended on answering a contentious question in such a thorough, objective and authoritative way.

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Andrew Fine, *The Price of Truth: The Journalist who Defied Military Censors to Report the Fall of Nazi Germany*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2023. xv + 290 pp. ISBN 978-1501765940 (hardback). £27.99.

Andrew Fine's latest book is a study of a man and an incident. As a reporter based in Europe during the bloody denouement of the largest war in history, Ed Kennedy was a journalist at the peak of his career. Kennedy was not only covering news stories of interest to an enormous rapt audience but was also shaping up to become the chief of his bureau, the Associated Press, in Paris. In a single day all this would be lost.

As one of the journalists chosen to witness and report the surrender of all German forces in Europe, Kennedy also had the opportunity to secure one of the greatest

scoops of the war. However, in the rush to be the first to file the biggest story of the war so far, Kennedy infuriated the military and media establishments alike by appearing to break two promises. The first was the strict military order that forbade a reporter giving military information to the media before it was officially released. For Kennedy the second was perhaps the bitterest. Fellow journalists who had also been present at the surrender ceremony swore to each other that they would wait and file together once the military gave permission. As Andrew Fine demonstrates, the timeline for Kennedy's decision was marred by confused orders and misunderstandings.

In addition to the very interesting story of Ed Kennedy, Fine also examines the nature of US wartime reporting. Whilst at times tangential to Kennedy's story those sections of this book help to enrich our knowledge of the Second World War further. Of interest to those studying journalism and historians of the Second World War requiring basic knowledge of wartime-reporting, Fine's examination is useful.

However, military reporting, like great moments of civil achievement gain great audiences. A reporter in wartime can make a name for themselves and the American public desperately sought news. So, a triangle existed between the media, the military and the public. Fine is excellent at keeping each of these actors in the story. In order to keep the relationship between each on good terms a Bureau of Public Relations was introduced early in the war. Such measures help to explain how the American nation could be motivated for a foreign war without the authoritarianism which drove Axis nations. However, the three actors Fine focuses on had to tread a fine line. In a crucial early paragraph, Fine details the three elements of wartime reporting which needed to be kept in balance. Firstly, the press had to report to the public without damaging the military's war effort. Secondly, the press had to keep the military happy whilst also competing with each other to deliver the news fastest. And lastly, the public were suspicious of the media for manipulating or suppressing war news.

Unlike other examinations of various figures from the military-media complex, Fine's preparatory analysis of the three actors is directly connected to the story of Ed Kennedy. The three way tug of war certainly explains how Kennedy's leaking of the German surrender might have come about. Media outlets wanted their reporters to file the big story first to make more money, the public were desperate to know that a long war was over but the military wanted all information suppressed. Kennedy appears not to have been able to wait. Nor, as Fine writes was London. After Kennedy's story broke but before any official statement, London was lit up by raucous celebrations. The city was brighter too because floodlights on the buildings were turned on for the first time since 1939. It is perhaps a pity that Fine does not show any of the consequences of Kennedy's pre-emptive report. Certainly, it seems absurd that Kennedy was punished when the war was so nearly over and everyone was ready to celebrate. But for all the discussion of the need for military secrecy, did Kennedy's

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report actually jeopardise the lives of any people serving at the front? Fine quotes from General Eisenhower's missive in which potential loss of American lives is explicit. However, organised German resistance had ended by this point in the war and Berlin was occupied by the Soviets. Whilst especially tragic, deaths this close to the war's end were to be expected when German resistance in the final months of the war was fanatical and bizarre. In this mix of horror and confusion, the military's decision to blame Kennedy is preposterous.

For all Fine's diligent study there is no opinion on Kennedy's actions. Did Kennedy deliberately betray his fellow journalists in order to file his scoop, only to then see his career destroyed because the United States Army had not released the information? Or was Kennedy operating under the delusion that the news had been released and that it was now a race to file? Fine prefers to lay out the information and then step away. Kennedy, Fine argues, was not a bad man. But was a man who certainly lost his reputation and the chance to lead the Paris office. A situation which could not exist in 2023 when instant access to an audience on the internet has ended the newspaper scoop.

In the final chapter Fine reconciles the example provided by Ed Kennedy within the wider apparatus of war time journalism. Press and military relations were constantly strained because of the opposite aims of the organisations. Kennedy's decision to completely ignore the rules of the relationship, Fine writes, is indicative of how little patience was left between the two sides. As journalists constantly seek to harry and question authority, the military might have wished for a time when war fighting could be kept far from the eyes of the public at home.

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