

Review of the book  
the price of glory  
history essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

For quite a long time the battle of Verdun has been considered as probably the best illustration of the Great War. "The Price of Glory" which was first published in 1963, is often referenced in several other books that address the wars of the 20th century. The Germans, in their attempt to bleed their enemy, the French, till the last drop; they established an offensive on the Verdun's strategic fortress. Their great and only aim was to lure the French into losing as many soldiers as they could so that they could be unable to carry on with the war. Actually the Germans launched some attrition early enough in an effort to alleviate pressure on Verdun. However, the Verdun is almost overwhelmed by the Somme and Ypres in understanding of the 1st world war to the Britons.

According to World Peace Newsletter, the title of the book "the price of glory is somehow" is somehow misleading since the book contains considerable details on the general happenings of the Great War contrary to what the title suggests. In other words the title of the book does not give an appropriate hint to what is contained in the book itself. However many readers don't get surprised by this weakness of the book since the book is actually a part of a trilogy of books written by Alistair. This set of books focused mainly on the long time rivalry between German and France which existed during the Franco-Prussian war and during the first and the second world wars. The last two books of Alistair talks about the wars in general while the Verdun 1916 concentrates on the French experience.

The author of this book shows a lot of competency in the study of a military leader. For instance in this book, the author particularly paints lucid and tells pictures of men like Falkenhayn, Joffre and Petain. The book clearly portrays

the author's personality of command as well as his grasp of the bigger picture. Alistair Horne also ventures into describing in detail the present day France. This happens to be quite a wise move by the author since it puts the French's army conduct in into an appropriate context. It also shows the importance of immersing oneself in the culture of a nation's military in understanding the actions of the nation's army. In doing this the author considers the impact that the French society had on her army, the Franco-Prussian war and the Napoleons historical legacy. The author also shows consideration of the Grand Quartier General's effects and the beliefs of the French's army in the offensive reform.

However many scholars have criticized the book on several grounds. For instance the book does not reflect its age since despite the fact that it was written in the 1960s, the book is still so much couched in the mythology of the Great War. Historians of the Great War era may have studied and compared the first and the second wars and tempted to conclude that the first war was worse than the second. However modern historians like the author of this book should portray more critical arguments on the wars, and even challenge these conclusions (World Peace Newsletter). Again, the book having been based on a modern study, many readers believe that the author should have presented a better referencing in the book particularly showing the sources where he drew his conclusions from. Moreover the author shows some weakness when he uses so many French quotes and fails to translate them for the general readers (Horne 1993). The author fails to understand that not all interested readers of the book that can read and understand

French. Actually this is quite bothering as some readers do not realize the full value of the work while others are forced to pay for translation.

On the other side I find the book as a well researched and a well written work that gives substantial details to the enormous human struggles and wars of the 20th century. The book specifically focuses on the battle of Verdun and I feel that nobody has so far written a better book on this issue. The author presents a wide range of topics that run the whole gamut from the everyday life in the trenches, the personal accounts of wars, the impact of weaponry and technology on the battle and the detailed evaluation of the military techniques of both the French and the Germans (Horne 1993 p. 23) The author writes all these details in a prose form which displays the respect and compassion that the author holds for those men that took part in the battle of Verdun.

## Conclusion

Between February and July 1916, the French army lost approximately 275,000 soldiers while the Germans suffered almost 250,000 men. However the Germans had sent only 46 divisions to the battle field Verdun while the French had sent 70 divisions. The Germans plan of bleeding the French up to the last drop thus failed terribly and though the French did not win the German only got a simple win which was against their plan of not only winning against their enemies but also killing them up to the last one. The author of the book " the price of glory" therefore refers the battle of Verdun as the worst ever fought in history. The book is however very charming. In its time the book was quite classic and it still stands up considerably well in the

contemporary time. The author of the book shows that the battle of Verdun is very fundamental to understanding the 1st world war to those who waged it, to the traditions that controlled them and to the world that provided them with the opportunity.