



Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp

By Mark Celinscak

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Winner of the 2016 Vine Award for Nonfiction

The Allied soldiers who liberated the Nazi concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen in April 1945 were faced with scenes of horror and privation. With breathtaking thoroughness, *Distance from the Belsen Heap* documents what they saw and how they came to terms with those images over the course of the next seventy years. On the basis of research in more than seventy archives in four countries, Mark Celinscak analyses how these military personnel struggled with the intense experience of the camp; how they attempted to describe what they had seen, heard, and felt to those back home; and how their lives were transformed by that experience. He also brings to light the previously unacknowledged presence of hundreds of Canadians among the camp's liberators, including noted painter Alex Colville.

Distance from the Belsen Heap examines the experiences of hundreds of British and Canadian eyewitnesses to atrocity, including war artists, photographers, medical personnel, and chaplains. A study of the complicated encounter between these Allied soldiers and the horrors of the Holocaust, *Distance from the Belsen Heap* is a testament to their experience.

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Editorial Review

Review

‘A thoughtful and useful addition to the literature on the Holocaust, Celinscak's work brings together solid archival research and interdisciplinary approaches to shed important new light on an under-research subject.’

(Nicholas J. Steneck *The Journal of Military History* vol 80:04:2016)

‘This book is a worthy addition to any scholar’s library, especially those who study the Holocaust, genocide, or World War II.’

(Melissa Young *H-Net/H-War* September 2016)

"It is the single best book on the liberation of Belsen or any other one of the camps that became symbols of Nazi depravity."

(Robert Abzug *Canadian Jewish Studies / Etudes juives canadiennes*, vol. 24, 2016 2016-12-07)

"This book is a valuable addition, with new information, to accounts about this infamous place"

(Jane S Gabin *The Wiener Library*, December 2016 2016-12-23)

‘Celinscak’s book is yet again proof that much new material on the Holocaust remains to be discovered and that even the best-known parts of the history hold secrets yet to be uncovered.’

(Dan Stone *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol 30:03:2016)

‘*Distance from the Belsen Heap* is a model study of events that have for too long been considered footnotes to history.’

(Robert H. Abzug *Canadian Jewish Studies* vol 24:2016)

‘Required reading. Essential. All levels/libraries.’

(M.A. Mengerink *Choice Magazine* vol 53:11:2016)

“A very well documented study of one of the key events in the history of the Holocaust. Engaging, well researched, and unusually specific in the lenses.” (Jury, Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature)

“This is a remarkable account of the Allied liberation of Belsen. It builds on the growing and diverse

scholarship in the field and develops it further by wide ranging and careful research. This topic requires a sensitive approach and Celinscak has more than met this challenge. Sources ranging from art and photography, oral history, and contemporary reports are combined with great subtlety and purpose. Neglected areas, especially the Canadian forces and their role in the camp's liberation, are rightly restored to the narrative. Multidisciplinary, it is a major contribution to Holocaust studies."

(Tony Kushner, Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations, University of Southampton)

"A valuable, thoroughly researched work, *Distance from the Belsen Heap* rightly rebalances the story of Bergen-Belsen's liberation to include the Canadian experience."

(Suzanne Bardgett, Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, Imperial War Museums)

Review

"By focusing on the camp's liberators and their attempts to understand and communicate ideas about their experience, *Distance from the Belsen Heap* adds a new dimension to our knowledge of an important aspect of the Holocaust."

(Terry Copp, Director Emeritus, Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic, and Disarmament Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University)

About the Author

Mark Celinscak is an assistant professor in the Department of History at Trent University.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Pell:

The experience that you get from *Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp* may be the more deep you looking the information that hide in the words the more you get considering reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but *Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp* giving you excitement feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in particular way that can be understood through anyone who read this because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this specific *Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp* instantly.

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