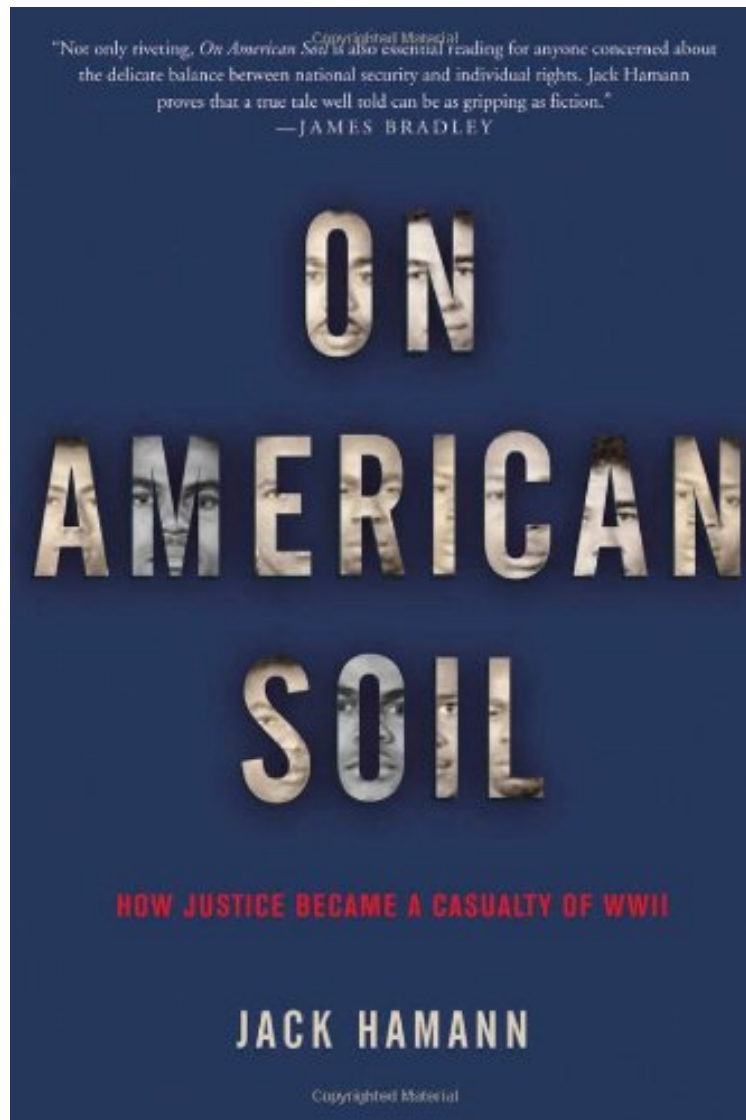


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On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II

Jack Hamann

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Jack Hamann : On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Miscarriage of JusticeBy Karen RobertsThis is fascinating, and for the most part, unknown history from WWII. After reading extensively about the horrendous treatment of American soldiers by the Nazi's, I was curious about our treatment of POWs. I was surprised to find this book in response to my search, and am so glad I found and read this engaging account of the only POW to die under our watch "on American

Soil". This is the story about an Italian POW who was found hanged at a military base near Seattle after a riot by African American troops. There was much anger and resentment of the good treatment these POWs received, by a country determined to follow the Geneva convention. The Italians were captured in North Africa, and dispersed to various Allied countries for the duration of the war. Those who weren't a fascist or Nazi sympathizers were eventually put to work in noncombatant duties to help free up as many American soldiers as possible for the war efforts overseas. This was done only after Italy surrendered, and thus were no longer our enemy. As American GIs worked along side them, resentments grew over what was perceived as coddling. Both Caucasian and Black soldiers were irritated, but white soldiers egged on Black soldiers, until a riot broke out because of these underlying tensions. An Italian knocked out a Black soldier who, in a drunken state, cursed a group of Italians, one of whom struck back. The Black troops, having just been prepared to ship out, and trained to seek revenge for any assault on their brethren, unleashed a torrent of violent assault on the Italians in their nearby compound. Dozens were seriously injured by the time the MPs came upon the scene to break it up. A lone Italian soldier was found hanged nearby. The justice that was served, was self serving for the JAG attorney who prosecuted the case with an eye to advancement of his own career. The now well known Leon Jaworsky was determined to get convictions, as was the Pentagon and the White House, given that Italy had surrendered and was now an ally, working with the US to drive Hitler's troops out of northern Italy. This murder looked bad for us on the international scene. Jaworsky withheld evidence from the defense, the initial investigation was so amateur as to be a joke, and the defendants were all Black, in a service which was still segregated, and filled with racist leanings. The lives of over 40 men were ruined by the miscarriage of justice, all being sentenced to hard labor, and being dishonorably discharged from the service. The murder was never really solved, so the best and brightest of the Black soldiers were charged with the crime, it being assumed that they were the ones leading the charge! The author brilliantly brings this story to light after discovering long classified material, which shed the light of day on this dark chapter in war history. A must read for those interested in WWII history, history of race relations in the military, and mistreatment of POWs. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Jam Hamann Cared! By Zandra Y. Hayes My uncle's experience is included in this book and while I knew about it I didn't read it until days after his passing. My Uncle Roy was a loving, caring person to us as children, but struggled during his life and his experience depicted in this book helped me to understand some of the things I witnessed. No one should have to be treated the way these soldiers were and the fact that being Black allowed others to feel it was acceptable is heart breaking. Uncle Roy's grandson became a successful NBA player and catered to his grandfather by taking him on the road frequently and all of us loved him deeply. The United States Army eventually tried to right the wrong, but how could this happen On American Soil? 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. On American Soil By Gladys W. Stevens No doubt I am prejudiced about this book as Jack Hamman and his wife came to our town to interview a friend of mine who was one of the American soldiers involved in the incident at Fort Lewis. I do recommend everyone interested in World War II read this offering. Mr. Hamman spent a lot of time and effort to get the facts straight... his method of sharing those facts is very readable. It is an incredible story and one I had not been aware of until his visit. Would I be talking out of turn to mention when we met him the working title was "The Broken Column"?

On a hot August night in 1944, a soldier's body was discovered hanging by a rope from a cable spanning an obstacle course at Seattle's Fort Lawton. The body was identified as Private Guglielmo Olivotto, one of the thousands of Italian prisoners of war captured and brought to America. The murder stunned the nation and the international community. Under pressure to respond quickly, the War Department convened a criminal trial at the fort, charging three African American soldiers with the lynching and first-degree murder of Private Olivotto. Forty other soldiers were charged with rioting, accused of storming the Italian barracks on the night of the murder. All forty-three soldiers were Black. There was no evidence implicating any of these men. Leon Jaworski, later the lead prosecutor at the Watergate trial, was appointed to prosecute the case and seek the death penalty for three men who were most assuredly innocent. Through his access to previously classified documents and the information gained from extensive interviews, journalist Jack Hamann tells the whole story behind World War II's largest army court-martial story that raises important questions about how justice is carried out when a country is at war.

From Publishers Weekly An explosive but forgotten WWII incident that took place on native ground is unearthed by former NewsHour Seattle bureau chief Hamann. In August 1944, the Seattle area played host to Italian POWs on parole and to African-American GIs recently returned from overseas or waiting to ship out. The Italians had freedom of movement and received hospitality in Seattle homes; the African-Americans were subject to massive discrimination and restrictions. The resulting tension led to escalating scuffles, which in turn led to a riotous assault by the GIs on the Italians' quarters and to the death of one Italian. Forty-three GIs faced court-martial; three faced hanging. Hamann shows a then-unknown Leon Jaworski, nearly 30 years before Watergate, using his prosecutorial skills to the fullest, leaning on prejudices in order to make a case for murder. The lead defense attorney, Maj. William Beeks, cleared one third of the defendants (against whom Jaworski had marshalled only "hearsay and innuendo"); the rest were court-martialed, some with imprisonment--but no one was hanged. Hamann reconstructs the courtroom scenes admirably

and gives shape to the riot itself. He is best in depicting the men involved and the waste of lives that the episode entailed. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist

When TV journalist Hamann was covering the expansion of a sewage-treatment plant at Seattle's Discovery Park some 18 years ago, a ranger told him of an odd headstone at the park, dated August 14, 1944, with an Italian inscription. The offhanded remark would lead Hamann to investigate the unsolved murder of Italian POW Guglielmo Olivotto at the park, which was then an Army base known as Fort Lawton. More than 10,000 military personnel were at the base at any given time during the war, including soldiers leaving for, or returning from, the Pacific; Italian prisoners-of-war captured by Allied troops in northern Africa; and a large contingent of segregated black soldiers who served primarily as porters to load and unload ships in the Pacific theater. The story line that Hamann uncovers is compelling enough. But it is the crime's historical context--wartime racial dynamics, colossal army incompetence, international political implications, and the (humane) treatment of POWs, for example--that makes the book so relevant now. Alan Moores Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "An impressive debut book ... an enthralling read.* * * ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF 2005" -- Seattle Post-Intelligencer, May 10, 2005 "Razor-sharp ... Hamann's lively narrative and incisive commentary raise the standard for investigational writing." -- Library Journal, March 15, 2005 "The story is fascinating, not just well-researched and compelling, but human and engaging." -- Queen Anne Books, March 1, 2005 "This book reads like an outstanding piece of literary fiction, but it is investigative reporting of the highest order." -- Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., March 28, 2006 "Two thumbs up ... It is a fabulous read and would make a great movie." -- Armchair Interviews, March 15, 2005