



A War of Words: The Man Who Talked 4000 Japanese Into Surrender

Hamish McDonald

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'He told her about his struggle in Melbourne to turn himself into a British-style officer for the Australian Army . . . the nights in tents by the Pyramids, the terror of the landing under sniper fire and the scramble up the heights of Gallipoli, the filth and danger of the trenches at Lone Pine. He showed her the scar above his right eye . . . There was a lot he didn't tell her.' Raised Japanese in a European skin at the turn of the 20th century, fate and circumstance would ensure that Charles Bavier spent his life caught between two cultures, yet claimed by neither. The illegitimate son of a Swiss businessman, Charles was brought up by his father's Japanese mistress, before setting off on an odyssey that took him into China's republican revolution against the Manchus, the ANZAC assault on Gallipoli and British counter-intelligence in pre-war Malaya. Bavier's journey finally led him into a little-known Allied psych-war against Japan as part of the vicious Pacific War, where his unique knowledge of Japanese culture and language made him man of the hour. This is the story of a man regarded at times as a spy by both the Allies and the Japanese, but who remained true to the essential humanity of both sides of a dehumanised racial conflict. Though far from the glory he craved, Bavier saved thousands of lives in the South-West Pacific: the Japanese soldiers who surrendered and the Americans and Australians they would have taken with them. A War of Words traces the extraordinary life of Charles Bavier and is based on his own diaries and three decades of research by journalist and author Hamish McDonald.

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