

FROM AUSCHWITZ TO TRIDENT

John Burroughs

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slides accompanying talk

Auschwitz

Nazi concentration camp and extermination center, with gas chambers, in Poland. The overall number of victims from 1940-1945 is estimated at between 1.1 and 1.5 million people. The majority of them were Jewish. Most of the Jewish victims died in the gas chambers. Other victims: Poles, Gypsies, Soviet prisoners of war, and prisoners of other nationalities.

Trident nuclear-armed submarines based at Bangor, Washington

- Information from Natural Resources Defense Council:
- Nine Trident submarines
- Each can carry 24 Trident II D5 missiles – long-range
- Each missile can carry reentry vehicle with up to six warheads
- So each submarine could have 144 warheads
- 1100 W76 warheads at Bangor – 100 kilotons – each 7 times more than Hiroshima bomb
- 264 W88 warheads at Bangor – 455 KT – each 30 times Hiroshima bomb

Buildup at Bangor

More submarines have been based at Bangor in order to build up the U.S. Pacific presence. The buildup of the more capable Trident II D5s in the Pacific additionally "enhances system accuracy, payload, and hard-target capability, thus improving [U.S.] available responses to existing and emerging Pacific theater threats," Rear Adm. Charles B. Young, director of the navy's Strategic Systems Program, said in an August 2002 speech at the Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific.

Nature of Methods

Walking through the scene of genocide in Auschwitz, one begins to think of historical parallels. In particular, one wonders whether there is a difference between the Nazi concentration camps and the development of the atom bombs at Los Alamos, the test at Alamogordo, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which resulted in the virtually instantaneous annihilation of hundreds of thousands of people)... with regard to the scale of the killing, ***the recruitment of capable minds, the harnessing of science and technology, the extent of organization, the resort to efficient project management methods***, and the choice of targets to maximize annihilation of Japanese civilians – the Manhattan project and its follow-up were like the concentration camps, in fact, even more horrendous in their impact. *Designing Nuclear Weapons: The Moral Question*, Amulya K.N. Reddy, in Prisoners of the Nuclear Dream, edited by M.V. Ramana and C. Rammmanohar Reddy, Orient Longman, pp. 190 – 194.

Nuremberg crimes

- - murder and ill-treatment of POWs and civilians in occupied territories, like the Soviet Union – these were war crimes
- - murder, ill-treatment, inhumane acts and extermination of civilian populations in Germany and in occupied territories, like Poland, in concentration camps and gas chambers. These were crimes against humanity.
- - the launching of aggressive war – the crime against peace

Principle of individual responsibility

Leaders who planned and committed or were complicit in atrocities can be prosecuted for international crimes, regardless of whether their acts were done pursuant to national law or superior's order; ordinary soldiers who carried out obviously unlawful orders are also liable.

Other lessons of Nuremberg

- large-scale atrocities against civilian populations are crimes against humanity
- rejection of the Nazi doctrine of total war, in which “the moral ideas underlying the Conventions which seek to make war more humane are no longer regarded as having force or validity”
- rejection of the notion that “military necessity” justifies overriding rules of war. One tribunal said the rules “must be followed even if it results in the loss of a battle or even a war.”
- rejection of ideological reasons for violations of the rules: that the Nazis were fighting communists in the Soviet Union was no justification for murder and ill-treatment

Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons, 1996

International Court of Justice:

"the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law."

Advisory Opinion

“The cardinal principles contained in the texts constituting the fabric of humanitarian law are the following. The first is aimed at the protection of the civilian population and civilian objects and establishes the distinction between combatants and non-combatants; States must never make civilians the object of attack and must consequently never use weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets.”

National Academy of Sciences

[T]he ICJ unanimously agreed that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is strictly limited by generally accepted laws and humanitarian principles that restrict the use of force.

Accordingly, any threat or use of nuclear weapons must be limited to, and necessary for, self defense; it must not be targeted at civilians, and be capable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets; and it must not cause unnecessary suffering to combatants, or harm greater than that unavoidable to achieve military objectives.

Nat'l Academy, cont'd

In the committee's view, the inherent destructiveness of nuclear weapons, combined with the unavoidable risk that even the most restricted use of such weapons would escalate to broader attacks, makes it extremely unlikely that any contemplated threat or use of nuclear weapons would meet these criteria.

-Committee on International Security and Arms Control of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Article VI: “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

Interpretation of disarmament obligation

International Court of Justice, unanimous, 1996 opinion:

“there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and *bring to a conclusion* negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament *in all its aspects* under strict and effective international control.”

2000 NPT Commitments

- entry into force of the CTBT and a moratorium on nuclear explosive testing in the meantime;
- negotiating a treaty banning production of fissile materials for weapons;
- applying the principle of irreversibility to nuclear weapons reductions and elimination;
- further developing of verification capabilities;
- measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons;
- a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk of their use and to facilitate their elimination.

Breach of disarmament obligation

- *The build-up of Trident submarines at Bangor is not consistent with the commitments to a diminishing role for nuclear weapons, and reduction of their operational status.*
- *The United States remains capable of firing more than 1500 warheads, including those on patrolling Trident submarines, on a half hour notice. Russia has a capability to fire several hundred warheads on short notice.*
- *There are no negotiations going on concerning reductions of U.S., Russian, and other states' nuclear forces. The 2002 Moscow Treaty contained no requirements for the dismantling of delivery systems like Trident or warheads.*
- *The United States has not ratified the CTBT. No negotiations are underway on a treaty to control fissile materials – highly enriched uranium and plutonium – used for weapons.*

Individual responsibility

"the very essence of the [Nuremberg] Charter is that individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual state."

– Nuremberg Tribunal