

## Sixtieth Anniversary of Hiroshima and The World Safe

By Wayne Northey

[David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.” Then Nathan said to David, “**You are the man!**” – The Bible]

They said it would hasten making the world safe for democracy. It was novel and bold. British Joint Chiefs of Staff first floated it, and the Americans soon enough were convinced. The project, code named *Operation Aztec*, was launched by the Allies late in 1944. After all, the Germans started it by firebombing London... My dad said it had real potential to bring the War to an early end, if only outraged German citizens would rise up *en masse* against the Nazi Command.

The surprise raids by Allied soldiers on the troop trains initially proved easy, since by then Germany's defences southeast of Dresden were virtually non-existent. The fools readily surrendered. Lots of small nearby towns and rural areas were also attacked. The Elbe River rolled right through the spectacularly cultured city of Dresden on its way to the North Sea. The juxtaposition of thousands of floating corpses couldn't have been starker. The massive Allied leafletting and radio propaganda announced there would be a minimum of one thousand victims a day until Germany surrendered. It eventually was upped to two thousand, then three... It was worth trying; *anything* was by then... To quickly bring this brutal War to an end, to bring our troops and values home.

The “older German soldiers were easy.”, dad reported. He continued, “Who knows what horrors they had committed, possibly against the Jews, certainly other Allied targets?” Still their faces close up all looked the same – such terror! – including eventually just kids who by War's end were joining the Nazis by the thousands. My dad also claimed “the kid soldiers were harder. Civilians the hardest. But we kept remembering, they were all Nazis, the whole damn lot! Initially, women and children were to be spared. But they were Nazis too! Or would produce and become them.” Besides, the propaganda impact would be ruthlessly shocking. “It was for our troops we heard over and over again, for civilization, for democracy.” My dad initially I guess believed it.

Twenty-five at a time were lined up, no hoods (they would be messy to remove afterwards) and twenty-five in the squad, each needing only forty bullets to bag the thousand; later eighty bullets; eventually one hundred and twenty? and more?... He never specified the ballistics, but they were the mushroom kind that entered neatly on one side, then blew off half the head on the other. At least none of the victims would drown... . My dad remembered clearly “the birds brightly chirping on the mornings it was our turn. Until the first volley rang out.” He explained, “I always looked away immediately. The birds dispersed even faster!” He never knew what kind of songsters they were. He never knew one of his targets... what lives they had lived, might have still lived.

One different squad a day, seven in all, weekly rotation. You never knew which day was yours, until the orders were given that very morning.

They then loaded them daily onto trucks and dumped all one, eventually two, three and more thousand at once over the precipice edge into the roiling river below, sharp at 8:00 a.m. It must have been a sight: several trucks lined up over the gorge, awaiting the order, then lifting the immolated high in the dumpsters like the Aztec priest's knife and palpitating hearts, and plunging them like a baptism into the dark river far below. My dad said chaplains were in fact on hand throughout. Consigning to hell? To heaven?

It was hoped the German populace would be outraged at the daily floating horror show and overthrow the *Führer*...

Ambrose Bierce wrote that "war is the means by which Americans learn geography". And Westerners. Chris Hedges wrote that "war is a force that gives us meaning". And Western values. Bruce Cockburn sang, "And they call it democracy." And Western civilization. I wish I had gotten to know my dad. I would have asked so many questions about war and values and civilization. I vaguely remember a few visits to the asylum. More that they stopped suddenly when I was five. My mom only years later admitted to the War-induced suicide. So sad for my dad: he was just following orders.

They say the Aztecs at the height of their civilization sacrificed twenty thousand victims a year. They say the Allies at the height of "our finest hour" slaughtered or wounded through "moral bombing" (Winston Churchill) about two million civilians. *They say the most destructive single terrorist attack in human history happened sixty years ago this August 6 on a beautiful summer day in Hiroshima. Thousands of kids that morning too for a time listened to the birds chirping, their vapourized hearts in a split second en masse lifted high by a mushroom cloud...*

They say it was to make the world *safe*...

*[My dad in fact died peacefully in his sleep in his eighty-first year. He had served only on the Italian Front, never in Germany or elsewhere; never on a firing squad to my knowledge. He refused to talk about any of the War. It was known that Canadians sometimes did not take prisoners on that front... There was no "Operation Aztec". There was however in fact a bomb dropped August 6, 1945 codenamed "Little Boy" that killed 70,000 people instantaneously and stopped hearts, time and Western civilization precisely at 8:17 a.m. Another bomb, "Fat Man", released over Nagasaki three days later, obliterated 40,000 outright. Civilization once stopped, the Cold War began... As for Dresden: on February 13 and 14, 1945, this refugee and medical centre was reduced to rubble with tens of thousands of civilian deaths, by the worst firebombing in European history. The Allied murderers never even saw the faces of their victims, thousands of whom simply melted away in the holocaust infernos.]*