

Igor Primoratz University of Melbourne

### The Bombing of German Cities in WW2: The Moral Issue

More than sixty years after the end of World War II, the terror bombing of German cities by the Allies remains one of the most controversial issues of the war. One strand of controversial debate approaches the subject in purely strategic terms. Another focuses on the morality of the bombing. In this paper, I discuss the latter question. I look into the main ways in which the bombing campaign might be morally defended: (1) as a way of ensuring a more equitable distribution of inevitable suffering and loss brought about by war; (2) by the complicity of the victims; (3) as retaliation or reprisal; (4) as a violation of jus in bello permitted and indeed enjoined by a 'supreme emergency'; (5) as a means justified by the aim to was to achieve. I argue that all these attempts at justification fail. The bombing of German cities was an unmitigated atrocity. In terms of the spirit if not the letter of international law at the time, it was a war crime of immense proportions that deeply compromised the "good war" of the Allies were prosecuting. Viewed historically, it was a crucial stage in the process of ever more comprehensive and systematic victimization of enemy civilians as a supplement to, or even a substitute for, fighting enemy soldiers.

Web pages:

<http://www.philosophy.unimelb.edu.au/staff/Primoratz/>

<http://www.cappe.edu.au/staff/igor-primoratz.htm>