

The Hiroshima Project

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50 years ago the United States of America dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Over 92.000 people were killed in the flash of an instant ¹, an estimated 150.000-200.000 died in the months thereafter ², and today still 400.000 are under medical or psychological treatment ³. What the longterm effects of this explosion, and of the more than 1788 ⁴ known test explosions that followed, on genetic material will be is still under investigation ⁵.

The first use of an atomic bomb in the history of warfare was only the culmination of a series of gruesome, cruel events which were the result of half a century of modern warfare, which had introduced the murder of civilian masses on a global scale by employing advanced technology.

By the time World War II had ended, 20 million Russian civilians, 10 million Chinese civilians and 6 million European-Jewish civilians had died ⁶ - globally a total of around 55 million civilians and soldiers had died ⁷.

The first use of an atomic bomb in warfare also marked the beginning of a new era. The immensity of the unleashed energy of an exploding atomic bomb shocked scientists, military people and civilians alike: the first global problem of this century had been created, and there was no return.

The bomb on Hiroshima became a world wide symbol for the threat to the existence of our planet and all life on it, a threat that in the 50 years that have passed since, we have learned to live with and, almost, to ignore.

REFERENCES/ QUELLEN

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- 2 Imidas. Innovative Multi- Information Dictionary. Annual Series, p. 311. Tokyo: Sheisha, 1991.
- 3 Die Atombombe im japanischen Spielfilm. Barbara Geschwinde (unpublished thesis). Gelsenkirchen, 1995.
- 4 Catalog of known and putative nuclear explosions from unclassified sources. Oklohama Geological Survey Observatory, Oklahama, 1994.
- 5 See: Radiation Effects Research Foundation. Japan.
- 6 High Energy Weapons (introduction text). Gary K. Au. Sydney, 1995.
- 7 Jahre unseres Lebens 1945-1949. Dieter Franck. Hamburg: Rororo, 1983.

Some Thoughts

The 2 big events of this century:

1. World War II, mass murder on a global scale, culminating in the atomic bomb, murder for the advanced
2. The digital revolution, culminating in a communication and information explosion (or implosion).

50 years after the explosion of the first atomic bomb, the global systems of communication and information are on the verge of explosion as well.

It might be as well to stand still for a moment and look back.

Victim and perpetrator/raper/killer have always been miles apart in their psychological spaces. This applies to individuals as well as ethnic groups or countries.

(It is the perpetrator's main task to deny the real implications of what he has brought about).

Suddenly the Internet came between. Whatever digital communication does, it also enables the bridging of large gaps, for instance those between former enemies.

The invention of the computer, the development of artificial intelligence and the implementation of the Internet were all instigated for military purposes.

A vague suspicion tells me that the events of this century still need a lot of investigation.

The event of the atomic bomb was of such great horror, high impact, beyond human understanding, that for a long, long time it may be necessary and valuable to take a closer look at various aspects which have been hidden under the dust of memory.

The winner has no monopoly on suffering.

How are we, the world, dealing with 50 years of Hiroshima?

USA. "Hiroshima Picture Gallery", part of "Countdown to '95" guest edited by Eric GaUager of Hood College and Adam Luther of the Center for Defense Information (note that the bomb dropped on Hiroshima was named 'Little Boy'; the bomb depicted was dropped on Nagasaki) (<http://galaxy.einet.net-80/galaxy/Government/Military/cdi/picgal/htm>)

Japan: "They speak of the A-bomb", part of "Hiroshima Sightseeing and Tours" of the Radiation Effects Research Foundation, which is supported by the government of Japan and the government of the USA.

(<http://aqua.rerf.or.jp/Outside/ENG/Hiroshima/Sightseeing/Peace-Memorial-Park/They-speak-A-Bomb.html>)

The Hiroshima Project is a network based information project.

It is a guided tour through the World Wide Web which takes the visitor along World Wide Web sites all over the world which have information about the atomic bomb on Hiroshima 50 years ago and its commemoration today.

The tour is structured as a documentary television series would be, but it is non-linear, interactive and open-ended, and can be accessed like a database or catalog.

The Hiroshima Project not only gives information about the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and the 50 years thereafter. It also gives information on the atomic bomb (which informs about the non-information as well). It doesn't just show the valuable information, it also shows the non-interest, the denial and the ignorance.

It juxtaposes geographical and cultural opposites, crosses boundaries between perpetrators and victims. It shows how the world is currently dealing with this event and with the life-threat that the knowledge of production of atomic bombs imposes on us.

The project shows how this theme has been transformed in literature, film and the arts. The project converges into, circles around and leads back to one central document, the book 'Black Rain' by Masuji Ibuse. This book confronts the reader with the incomprehensible by means of poetic experience. The context is no longer global — on the contrary, in this book the context is very personal: individual humans are confronted with the brute energy unleashed by the atomic bomb explosion, and one by one they undergo the devastating effects this energy has on them.

The Hiroshima Project incorporates:

- an information trail on the World Wide Web
- a local database of information (in cooperation with Barbara Geschwinde)
- a virtual art work
- a pointer to the home page of an art work

(in cooperation with Masahiro Miwa, Michael Hoch & Matthias Melcher)

The Hiroshima Project can be accessed in two ways:

- a 3-D navigator enables navigation in a virtual data landscape. The 3-D navigator is a sophisticated navigator, enabling intelligent guided search and can be downloaded for free on the Internet.
- a World Wide Web site on the Internet can be accessed with standard World Wide Web client software.

The Hiroshima Project will be in continuous development during the year 1995.

The Hiroshima Project is supported by the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne.