

peace pledge union

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Monument of shame

Inauguration of Bomber Command memorial by the Queen on 28 June

The Peace Pledge Union is troubled by the praise given to men of Bomber Command - including the 50,000 of its members who were killed - which itself killed over 300,000 people in Germany and many more elsewhere in Europe during WW2.

Mourning for these men will already have taken place a long time ago and many have been commemorated on memorials around the country and at the sites of airfields from where they flew. The vast new memorial to be unveiled by the Queen goes far beyond mere commemoration. Its sheer scale and attendant ceremony are a clear statement by its supporters, the military and the state that the core activities of Bomber Command - which an unbiased International Court would readily identify as a war crime - are here seen as laudable, heroic and noble.

We understand that the men of Bomber Command were shunned at the war's end. The politicians, and Churchill in particular, chose to distance themselves from Bomber Command's appalling and cruel destruction in the closing months of the war. The remaining men of Bomber Command have reason to be angry at their masters' duplicity; instead they lionise their commander-in-chief, Arthur Harris, the architect of indiscriminate mass killing.

We understand that amongst a group of men responsible for killing hundreds of thousands, many will feel the need to justify their actions; but we regret that wider society, and particularly those in power who support this enterprise, remain attached to such barbaric means.

It is regrettable that the concern expressed by people in Britain at "obliteration bombing" during the war itself finds so little echo 70 years later.

NOTES:

The Peace Pledge Union is the main British pacifist organisation (see www.ppu.org.uk), and was one of a number of organisations which criticised the British bombing strategy during WW2.

For any queries, contact PPU spokesperson Albert Beale on 020-7278 4474.