You work for the British Intelligence. Your office has secretly cracked the German Enigmacode—a program you call Ultra—which allows you to listen in on much of the secret German communication. On November 12, 1940, you intercept German messages describing Operation Moonlight Sonata—an air raid in great strength for the night of November 14/15, 1940, against the cathedral and industrial city of Coventry. You have only days to act on the information. But anything you do will alert the Germans that you knew about the raid—probably from breaking their Enigma code. Germany will then change the code system that will eliminate any future information being retrieved. What do you do?

During times of extreme danger such as a war, is it acceptable for a government to ignore the rights of some of its citizens if there is reason to believe it will help the country as a whole? What if they are not citizens? Are there basic human rights that need to be followed even if your country is at stake?

Was the U.S. justified in dropping atomic bombs? **The first bomb, dropped on the city of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, resulted in a death toll of around 135,000. The second, which hit Nagasaki on 9 August, killed at least 50,000 people – according to some estimates, as many as 74,000 died, most of which were civilians. Japan had no allies, was already blockaded, was under constant firebombing, and the Soviet Union was preparing to attack Japan. However, some military commanders estimated that a land invasion of Japan would cost tens of thousands of American lives. Additionally, the atomic bomb could serve as a powerful diplomatic tool in the future if its destructiveness was displayed.**

**How could something as terrible as the Holocaust happen? There were millions of people in Germany, and yet the death camps still existed. One idea is displayed in the following poem:**

In Germany, they came first for the Communists  
And I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist.  
And then they came for the trade unionists  
And I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist.  
And then they came for the Jews  
And I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew.  
And then... they came for me...   
And by that time there was no one left to speak up.

-[*Martin Niemöller*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Niem%C3%B6ller)

Is there more to it than this? Could another Holocaust happen?

After WWII, many Nazis were tried for their crimes during the Nuremberg Trials. The majority of them did not deny their crimes, but instead argued that they were only following orders and they had no choice. “Orders are orders.” Is this a valid defense? Who is the guiltiest? The politician enacting laws to create death camps, the officer who gives the order to murder, or the soldier that actually carries out the murder? Do they all deserve the same punishment?