

WEEK 7: JAPAN THE VICTIM 日本の被害 WRITING FROM THE RUINS

Reading 1: Critical Reports 1 Wilfrid [Peter] Burchett



*The Daily Express*, [UK], September 5  
1945

**THE ATOMIC PLAGUE**

**‘I Write This As A Warning To The World’\*\*  
DOCTORS FALL AS THEY WORK**

*Poison gas fear: All wear masks*

*Express Staff Reporter, Peter Burchett*

*Was the first Allied staff reporter to enter the atom-bomb city. He travelled 400 miles from Tokyo alone and unarmed, carrying rations for seven meals – food is almost unobtainable in Japan – a black umbrella, and a typewriter.*

**Here is his story from –**

**HIROSHIMA, Tuesday**

IN HIROSHIMA, 30 days after the first atomic bomb destroyed the city and shook the world, people are still dying, mysteriously and horribly – people who were uninjured in the cataclysm – from an unknown something which I can only describe as atomic plague.

Hiroshima does not look like a bombed city. It looks as if a monster steamroller had passed over it and squashed it out of existence. I write these facts as dispassionately as I can in the hope that they will act as a warning to the world.

In this first testing ground of the atomic bomb I have seen the most terrible and frightening desolation in four years of war. It makes a blitzed Pacific island seem like an Eden. The damage is far greater than photographs can show.

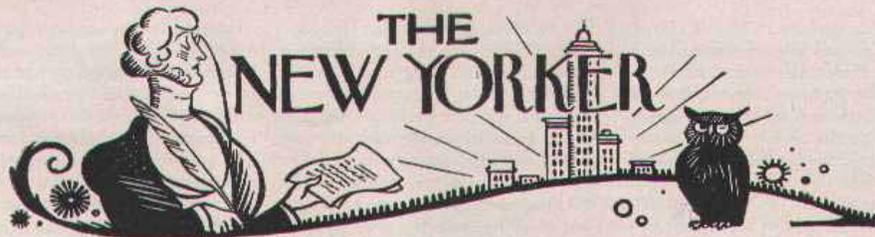
When you arrive in Hiroshima you can look around and for 25, perhaps 30 square miles, you can hardly see a building. It gives you an empty feeling in the stomach to see such man-made devastation.

I picked my way to a shack used as a temporary police headquarters in the middle of the vanished city. Looking south from there I could see about three miles of reddish rubble. That is all the atomic bomb left of dozens of blocks of city streets, of buildings, homes, factories and human beings.

**STILL THEY FALL**

There is just nothing standing except about 20 factory chimneys – chimneys with no factories. I looked west. A group of half a dozen gutted buildings. And then again nothing...

\*\* [Note that the editor of the Daily Express, Arthur Christensen, pulled the headline, ‘I Write This As A Warning To The World’ from Burchett’s text.]



## A REPORTER AT LARGE

### HIROSHIMA

#### I—A NOISELESS FLASH

AT exactly fifteen minutes past eight in the morning, on August 6, 1945, Japanese time, at the moment when the atomic bomb flashed above Hiroshima, Miss Toshiko Sasaki, a clerk in the personnel department of the East Asia Tin Works, had just sat down at her place in the plant office and was turning her head to speak to the girl at the next desk. At that same moment, Dr. Masakazu Fujii was settling down cross-legged to read the *Osaka Asahi* on the porch of his private hospital, overhanging one of the seven deltaic rivers which divide Hiroshima; Mrs. Hatsuyo Nakamura, a tailor's widow, stood by the window of her kitchen, watching a neighbor tearing down his house because it lay in the path of an air-raid-defense fire lane; Father Wilhelm Kleinsorge, a German priest of the Society of Jesus, reclined in his underwear on a cot on the top floor of his order's three-story mission house, reading a Jesuit magazine, *Stimmen der Zeit*; Dr. Terufumi Sasaki, a young member of the surgical staff of the city's large, modern Red Cross Hospital, walked along one of the hospital corridors with a blood specimen for a Wassermann test in his hand; and the Reverend Mr. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, pastor of the Hiroshima Methodist Church, paused at the door of a rich man's house in Koi, the city's western suburb, and prepared to unload a handcart full of things he had evacuated from town in fear of the massive B-29 raid which everyone expected Hiroshima to suffer. A hundred thousand people were killed by the atomic bomb, and these six were among the survivors. They still wonder why they lived when so many others

died. Each of them counts many small items of chance or volition—a step taken in time, a decision to go indoors, catching one streetcar instead of the next—that spared him. And now each knows that in the act of survival he lived a dozen lives and saw more death than he ever thought he would see. At the time, none of them knew anything.

THE Reverend Mr. Tanimoto got up at five o'clock that morning. He was alone in the parsonage, because for some time his wife had been commuting with their year-old baby to spend nights with a friend in Ushida, a suburb to the north. Of all the important cities of Japan, only two, Kyoto and Hiroshima, had not been visited in strength by *B-san*, or Mr. B, as the Japanese, with a mixture of respect and unhappy familiarity, called the B-29; and Mr. Tanimoto, like all his neighbors and friends, was almost sick with anxiety. He had heard uncomfortably detailed accounts of mass raids on Kure, Iwa-

kuni, Tokuyama, and other nearby towns; he was sure Hiroshima's turn would come soon. He had slept badly the night before, because there had been several air-raid warnings. Hiroshima had been getting such warnings almost every night for weeks, for at that time the B-29s were using Lake Biwa, northeast of Hiroshima, as a rendezvous point, and no matter what city the Americans planned to hit, the Superfortresses streamed in over the coast near Hiroshima. The frequency of the warnings and the continued abstinence of Mr. B with respect to Hiroshima had made its citizens jittery; a rumor was going around that the Americans were saving something special for the city.

Mr. Tanimoto is a small man, quick to talk, laugh, and cry. He wears his black hair parted in the middle and rather long; the prominence of the frontal bones just above his eyebrows and the smallness of his mustache, mouth, and chin give him a strange, old-young look, boyish and yet wise, weak and yet fiery. He moves nervously and fast, but with a restraint which suggests that he is a cautious, thoughtful man. He showed, indeed, just those qualities in the uneasy days before the bomb fell. Besides having his wife spend the nights in Ushida, Mr. Tanimoto had been carrying all the portable things from his church, in the close-packed residential district called Nagagawa, to a house that belonged to a rayon manufacturer in Koi, two miles from the center of town. The rayon man, a Mr. Matsui, had opened his then unoccupied estate to a large number of his friends and acquaintances, so that they might evacuate whatever they wished to a safe distance from the

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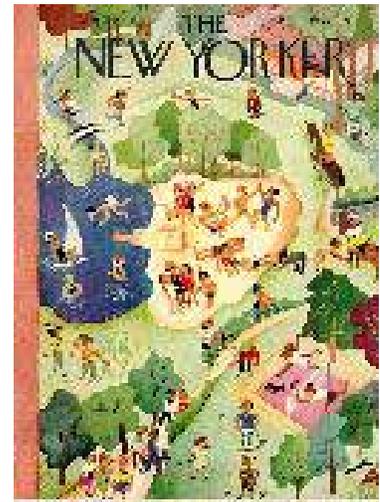
#### TO OUR READERS

The *New Yorker* this week devotes its entire editorial space to an article on the almost complete obliteration of a city by one atomic bomb, and what happened to the people of that city. It does so in the conviction that few of us have yet comprehended the all but incredible destructive power of this weapon, and that everyone might well take time to consider the terrible implications of its use.

—THE EDITORS

## Reading 2...

**THE LONG ARTICLE “HIROSHIMA” BY JOHN HERSEY** took up the entire 31 August 1946 issue of *The New Yorker*. There were no advertisements and no other articles. Hersey interviewed people in Hiroshima and wrote about what happened to them in a documentary style, reporting the facts of their experience in flat, plain language. The article caused a sensation and that issue of *The New Yorker* sold out within hours. The Book-of-the-Month club sent a free copy in book form to all its members. The text was also broadcast on the radio in the US and Great Britain and continued to be broadcast into the 1950s.



### ATOMIC BOMBS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—I have just been reading John Hersey's account of the effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They make an interesting footnote to Mr. Churchill's claim that the atomic bomb is now, fortunately, only available to a nation which can be trusted (I quote from memory) "only to use it in the interests of peace and justice." Would Mr. Churchill now explain how the interests of peace or justice (or whatever were the virtues he mentioned) could ever be served by the massacre, in circumstances of unspeakable horror, of tens of thousands of defenceless women and children?

There are the makings of another interesting speculation here—in fact, of several. We are, for example, continually being told that it is no defence of the soldiers and sailors on trial at Nuremberg to say that they were merely obeying orders; in fact, that they should have disobeyed orders which were clearly opposed to humanity and the "laws of war." What then about the airmen who were ordered to drop this token of progress on the nurseries and maternity homes of Hiroshima?

Finally, I trust that when the first atomic bomb is dropped on London we shall all be "sporting" enough to concede that the enemy too has a perfect right to "save the lives of thousands of his gallant fighting men."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

S. V. POLLOCK.

20, Telford Avenue, S.W.2. Sept. 23.

Hersey had been sent to Japan by *The New Yorker* in May 1946. He spent three weeks interviewing and collecting material in Hiroshima and elsewhere, then returned to the US to finish the article.

Steve Rothman, an American student of Hersey's article, assessed the effect of the article on world opinion: "The direct effect of "Hiroshima" on the American public is difficult to gauge. No mass movement formed as a result of the article, no laws were passed, and reaction to the piece probably didn't have any specific impact on U. S. military strategy or foreign policy. But certainly the vivid depictions in the book must have been a strong contributor to a pervasive sense of dread (and guilt) about nuclear weaponry felt by many Americans ever since August 1945."

This sense of guilt contributed directly to the conversion of Japan from the Menace of the 20s and late 30s to the postwar Victim, a process which itself contributed to Japan's recovery (the post-war

Phoenix 不死鳥) and status as the world's most committed anti-nuclear nation.

However, managing this process required a switch of focus away from the experiences of other Japanese civilians bombed by the US in Tokyo.

**"In some sort of crude sense which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin; and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose." –J. Robert Oppenheimer**

### READING 3: 日本の被害: THE TOKYO BOMBINGS OF 1945



**The atomic bombing of Hiroshima** on August 6 instantly resulted in about 80,000 deaths from the bomb and its effects, and a further 120,000 deaths in the years that followed.

**The atomic bombing of Nagasaki** on August 9 killed 26,000 instantly and injured 40,000 more.

**The incendiary bombing of Tokyo** in the 8 months January-August 1945 killed 500,000 people in Tokyo and caused 10,000,000 people to flee

the city. On one night alone, March 10 1945, 100,000 Tokyo civilians were killed.

**The first “fire bomb” raid** was on Kobe on February 3, 1945 and following relative success the AAF continued the tactic. Much of the armor and the defensive weapons of the bombers were also removed to allow increased bomb loads, Japanese air defence in terms of night-fighters and anti-aircraft guns was so feeble it was hardly a risk. The first such raid on Tokyo was on the night of February 23-24 when 174 B-29s destroyed around one square mile of the city. Following on that success 334 B-29s raided on the night of March 9-10, dropping around 1,700 tons of bombs. Around 16 square miles (41 km<sup>2</sup>) of the city were destroyed and over 100,000 people are estimated to have died in the resulting “fire storm”. It was the most destructive conventional raid of the war against Japan. In the following two weeks there were almost 1,600 further sorties against the four cities, destroying 31 square miles in total at a cost of only 22 aircraft. There was a third raid on Tokyo on May 26. [Wikipedia]



Aftermath of the Tokyo firebombing

**In 60 years (1945-2005) the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have had a far higher news profile than the fire bombing of Tokyo. The mushroom cloud of the Hiroshima bomb and the building at the epicentre of the bomb are part of global iconology, recognised everywhere. Why are the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remembered and commemorated (Peace Park, memorials, novels and films, stamps, school visits) more than the bombing of Tokyo? Points to bear in mind: Japan is the only nation to have experienced atomic bombing. It was not the first nation but among the first nations to bomb civilian populations: most notably in China. Is the higher profile of the atomic bombings just an example of successful news management?**

<b>QUESTIONNAIRE</b>	<b>CLASS NAME</b>	<b>WEEK NO.</b>
<b>NAME</b>	<b>STUDENT NO.</b>	<b>DATE</b>
<b>1. WHAT WAS THIS CLASS/FILM ABOUT?</b>		
<b>2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN QUESTIONS IT RAISES?</b>		
<b>3. WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS SUBJECT?</b>		
<b>4. ANY OTHER COMMENTS?</b>		