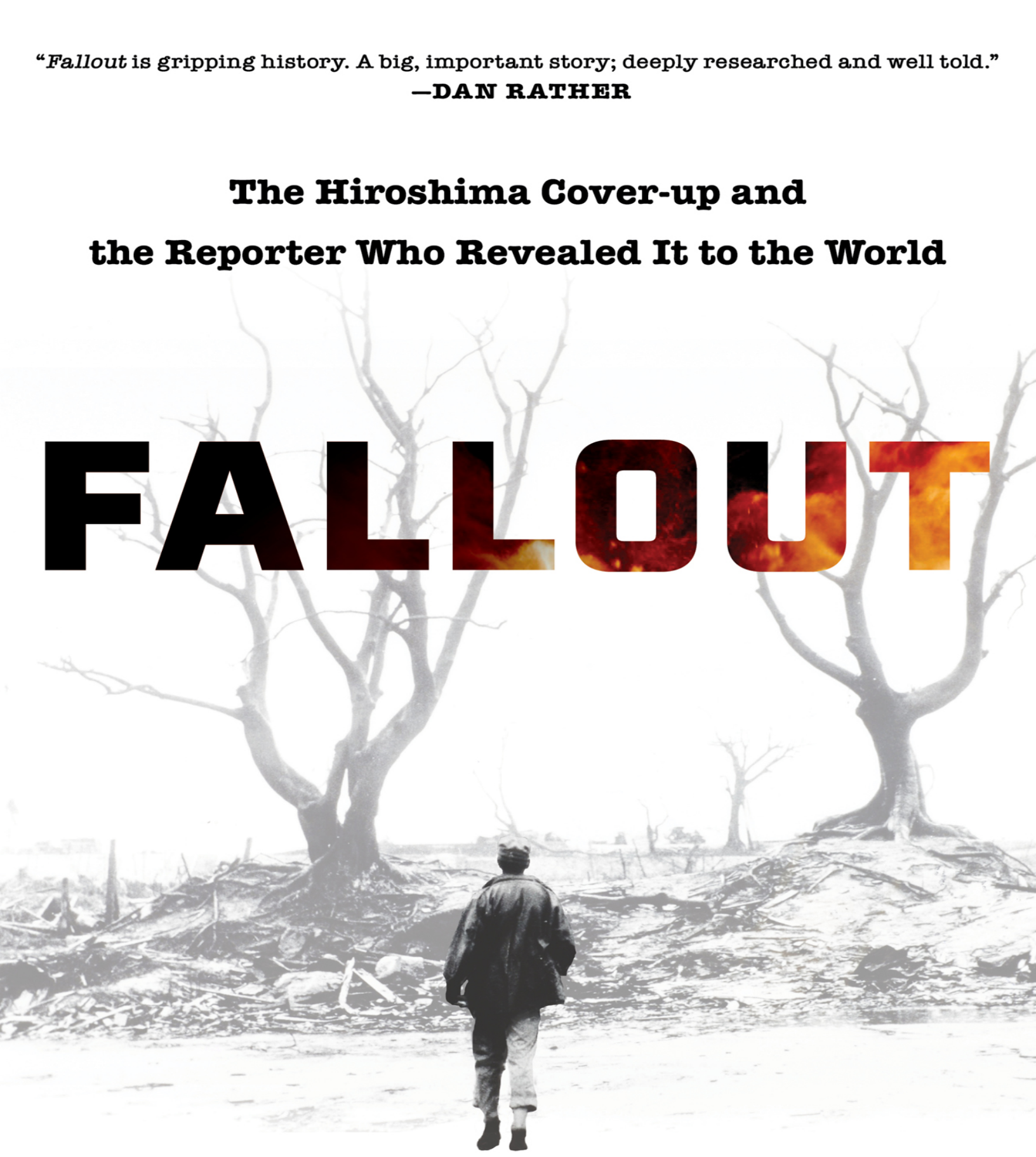
"*Fallout* is gripping history. A big, important story; deeply researched and well told."
—DAN RATHER

The Hiroshima Cover-up and the Reporter Who Revealed It to the World

FALLOUT



LESLEY M.M. BLUME

FALLOUT

The Hiroshima Cover-up
and the Reporter
Who Revealed It to the World

LESLEY M.M. BLUME

Simon & Schuster
New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

Introduction

John Hersey later claimed that he had not intended to write an exposé. Yet, in the summer of 1946, he revealed one of the deadliest and most consequential government cover-ups of modern times. The *New Yorker* magazine devoted its entire August 31, 1946, issue to Hersey's "Hiroshima," in which he reported to Americans and the world the full, ghastly realities of atomic warfare in that city, featuring testimonies from six of the only humans in history to survive nuclear attack.

The U.S. government had dropped a nearly 10,000-pound uranium bomb—which had been dubbed "Little Boy" and scribbled with profane messages to the Japanese emperor—on Hiroshima a year earlier, at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945. None of the bomb's creators even knew for certain if the then experimental weapon would work: Little Boy was the first nuclear weapon to be used in warfare, and Hiroshima's citizens were chosen as its unfortunate guinea pigs. When Little Boy exploded above the city, tens of thousands of people were burned to death, crushed or buried alive by collapsing buildings, or bludgeoned by flying debris. Those directly under the bomb's hypocenter were incinerated, instantaneously erased from existence. Many blast survivors—supposedly the lucky ones—suffered from agonizing radiation poisoning and died by the hundreds in the months that followed.

The city of Hiroshima initially estimated that more than 42,000 civilians had died from the bombing. Within a year, that estimate would rise to 100,000. It has since been calculated that as many as 280,000 people may have died by the end of 1945 from effects of the bomb, although the exact number will never be known. In the decades since, human remains have been regularly uncovered in the city's ground, and are still uncovered today. "You dig two feet and there are bones," says Hiroshima Prefecture governor Hidehiko Yuzaki. "We're living on that. Not only near the epicenter [of the blast], but across the city."

It was a massacre of biblical proportions. Even today—seventy-five years after the bombing—the name Hiroshima conjures up images of fiery nuclear holocaust and sends chills down spines around the world.

However, until Hersey's story appeared in the *New Yorker*, the U.S. government had astonishingly managed to hide the magnitude of what happened in Hiroshima immediately after the bombing, and successfully covered up the bomb's long-term deadly radiological effects. U.S. officials in Washington, D.C., and occupation officials in Japan suppressed, contained, and spun reports from the ground in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—which had been attacked by the United States with the plutonium bomb "Fat Man" on August 9, 1945—until the story all but disappeared from the headlines and the public's consciousness.

At first, the government appeared to be forthright about its new weapon. When U.S. president Harry S. Truman announced to the world that an atomic bomb had just been dropped on Hiroshima, he pledged that if the Japanese did not surrender, they could "expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth." Little Boy had packed an explosive payload equivalent to more than 20,000 tons of TNT, the president revealed, and was by far the largest bomb ever used in the history of warfare. Reporters and editors given text of this presidential announcement in advance received the news with disbelief. Young Walter Cronkite—then a United Press war reporter based in Europe—upon receiving a bulletin from Paris about the bomb, thought that "clearly… those French operators [had] made a mistake," he recalled later. "So I changed the figure to 20 tons." Soon, as updates to the story came in, "my mistake became abundantly clear."

Also, it seemed at first that the press was adequately reporting on the fates of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As the implications of the world's entrance into the atomic age began to sink in, it became apparent to editors and reporters everywhere that the atomic bomb was not just one of the biggest stories of the war but among the biggest news stories in history. After millennia of contriving increasingly horrible and efficient killing machines, humans had finally invented the means with which to extinguish their entire civilization. Humankind was "stealing God's stuff," as E. B. White wrote in the *New Yorker*.

Yet it would take many months—and the bravery of one young American reporter and his editors—before the world learned what had

actually transpired beneath those roiling mushroom clouds. “What happened at Hiroshima is not yet known,” reported the *New York Times* on August 7, 1945. “An impenetrable cloud of dust and smoke masked the target area from reconnaissance planes.” In many respects, the impenetrable cloud didn’t truly lift until Hersey got into Hiroshima in May 1946 and, weeks later, managed to publish an account of his findings there. Even though the *New York Times* was the only publication that had a reporter accompany the Nagasaki atomic bombing run and had maintained a bureau in Tokyo since the Japanese surrender, *Times* reporter (and later managing editor) Arthur Gelb stated that “most of us were unaware, at first, of the extent of the devastation caused by the bombs. John Hersey’s excruciatingly detailed account… finally brought home to Americans the magnitude of the event.”

Media coverage of the bombings had been initially widespread and intensive, but details of the aftermath were actually scarce from the beginning, thanks to U.S. government and military efforts to control information about their handiwork in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The United States—which had just won a painfully earned moral and military victory over the Axis powers—was not eager to “get the reputation for outdoing Hitler in atrocities,” as the country’s secretary of war put it. Right away, officials in Washington, D.C., and newly arrived occupation forces in Japan went into overdrive to contain the story of the human cost of their new weapon. The Japanese media was forbidden by occupation authorities to write or air stories about Hiroshima or Nagasaki, lest they “disturb public tranquility.” As foreign reporters began to get into the country, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were immediately put off-limits to them. The few journalists attempting to report on the atomic cities in the weeks immediately following the bombings were threatened with expulsion from Japan, harassed by U.S. officials, and accused of spreading Japanese propaganda, dispensed by a defeated enemy attempting to cultivate international sympathy after years of aggression and their own outsized atrocities.

On the home front, U.S. government officials corralled the population into thinking of the atom bomb as a conventional superbomb, painting it in terms of TNT and denying its radioactive aftermath. “It was just the same as getting a bigger gun than the other fellow had to win a war and that’s what it was used for,” said President Truman. “Nothing else but an artillery weapon.” When it was eventually conceded that bomb-induced radiation

poisoning was real, its horrors were downplayed. (It could even be a "very pleasant way to die," stated Lieutenant General Leslie R. Groves, head of the Manhattan Project, which had created the bombs in just three years.)

The American public was allowed to see images of the mushroom clouds and hear triumphant eyewitness descriptions from the American bombers themselves, but reports containing testimonies from below the clouds were virtually nonexistent. Images of Hiroshima's and Nagasaki's devastated landscapes were also released to newspapers and magazines by U.S. forces. However, while sobering, the post-atomic landscape photographs failed to register deeply enough with readers who had been inundated with images of decimated cities—London, Warsaw, Manila, Dresden, Chungking, among scores of others—on a daily basis for more than half a decade. Hersey himself acknowledged that post-bomb landscape photos could only get a limited emotional response; ruins, he thought, could be "spectacular; but… impersonal, as rubble so often is." What the American public did not see: photos of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki hospitals ringed by the corpses of blast survivors who had staggered there seeking medical help and died in agony on the front steps. (Most of the doctors and nurses had been killed or wounded anyway.)Nor did they see images of the crematoriums burning the remains of thousands of anonymous victims, or pictures of scorched women and children, their hair falling out in fistfuls.

The published images of Hiroshima's demolished landscape gravely undersold the reality of atomic aftermath. Usually a picture is worth a thousand words, but in this case it would take Hersey's 30,000 words to reveal and drive home the truth about America's new mega-weapon. The Japanese, of course, didn't need Hersey to educate them about the effects of Little Boy and Fat Man, but American readers were shocked when they were, at last, properly introduced to the nuclear bombs that had been detonated in their name.

Fallout is the backstory of how John Hersey got the full story about atomic aftermath when no other journalist could, and how "Hiroshima" became—and remains—one of the most important works of journalism ever created. Over the past seven decades, Hersey's "Hiroshima" has not, of course, prevented dangerous nuclear arms races; nor have its revelations solved the

problems of the atomic age, just as the *Washington Post*'s Watergate reporting did not solve the problem of government corruption.

But as the document of record—read over the years by millions around the world—graphically showing what nuclear warfare truly looks like, and what atomic bombs do to humans, "Hiroshima" has played a major role in preventing nuclear war since the end of World War II. In 1946, Hersey's story was the first truly effective, internationally heeded warning about the existential threat that nuclear arms posed to civilization. It has since helped motivate generations of activists and leaders to work to prevent nuclear war, which would likely end the brief human experiment on earth. We know what atomic apocalypse would look like because John Hersey showed us. Since the release of "Hiroshima," no leader or party could threaten nuclear action without an absolute knowledge of the horrific results of such an attack. That is, unless that act was one conducted amidst willful ignorance —or nihilistic brutality.

Casualty statistics can be numbing. While the initial lack of comprehension in the United States over Hiroshima's fate was largely due to the government's active suppression of information from the ground there, it did not help that much of the population was suffering from atrocity exhaustion by the end of the war. By 1946, Americans had been witnesses —along with the rest of the world—to carnage on an unprecedented scale. World War II remains the deadliest conflict in human history. The National WWII Museum estimates that, worldwide, 15 million combatants died, along with some 45 million civilians—although there may have been as many as 50 million civilian casualties among the Chinese alone. Russia puts its losses at 26.6 million dead; the United States lost more than 407,000 military servicemen and women. Every day during the war, gruesome death toll statistics were announced in American publications from fronts around the globe. The more zeros attached to a statistic, the more unfathomable it was. Somewhere along the way, the numbers seemed to stop representing the bodies of actual people; the human element became divorced from the tallies.

In "Hiroshima," Hersey informed his readers that 100,000 had died thus far in that atomic city as the result of the bombing. Yet had he presented this number and his other findings in a straightforward news story, "Hiroshima" likely would not have had such a visceral and enduring impact. As one of Hersey's journalist contemporaries, Lewis Gannett of the *New York Herald*

Tribune, put it, "When headlines say a hundred thousand people are killed, whether in battle, by earthquake, flood, or atom bomb, the human mind refuses to react to mathematics." In the immediate aftermath of the bombings, Americans were given varying estimates of Hiroshima and Nagasaki casualties—all of them grotesquely high, especially when one remembered that a single bomb was responsible for all of that death—but to no avail.

"You swallowed statistics, gasped in awe," Gannett wrote, "and, turning away to discuss the price of lamb chops, forgot. But if you read what Mr. Hersey writes, you won't forget."

For Hersey, driving home the gruesome reality behind those impersonal numbers was essential. Since 1939 he had covered various battlefronts and seen the savagery of which humans of all nationalities were capable once they stopped seeing their enemies and captives as fellow human beings. The best chance that mankind had for survival—especially now that warfare had gone nuclear, Hersey felt—was if people could be made to see the humanity in each other again.

This was a tall order. To create a work that would help restore a shared sense of humanity, Hersey would not only have to get behind those dangerously anesthetizing stats but also tackle the virulent, reductive racism that had given rise to wartime genocides and atrocities around the globe. Humanizing the Japanese for an American audience would be especially controversial and difficult. Hatred and suspicion toward the Japanese ran deep in this country after Pearl Harbor. "American pride [had] dissolved overnight into American rage and hysteria," Hersey recalled later. Approximately 117,000 people of Japanese descent had been detained in internment camps in the United States during the war. Hollywood had long been hard at work churning out propaganda and feature films warning of the subhuman yellow peril from the east. News about cruelties inflicted on American prisoners of war during the 1942 Bataan Death March, Japanese atrocities committed against civilians in China, and the savage battles over atolls in the Pacific had horrified Americans and reinforced the idea that all Japanese were bestial and fanatical.

In his speech announcing the Hiroshima bombing, President Truman had spoken for many Americans when he stated that, with the atomic attack, the Japanese "have been repaid many fold" for their own attack on Pearl Harbor four years earlier. The citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had

gotten what they deserved; it was as simple as that. One poll conducted in mid-August revealed that 85 percent of those surveyed endorsed the bombs' use, and in a different poll around that time 23 percent of those surveyed regretted that the United States didn't get a chance to use "many more of the bombs before Japan had a chance to surrender." Hersey had seen firsthand in Asia and the Pacific evidence of Japanese barbarity and tenacity in battle. Still, he was determined to make sure Americans could see themselves in the citizens of Hiroshima.

"If our concept of… civilization was to mean anything," he stated, "we had to acknowledge the humanity of even our misled and murderous enemies."

When he got into Japan, and then into Hiroshima—no small feat in an occupied country closely controlled by General Douglas MacArthur and his forces—Hersey managed to interview dozens of blast survivors. Among them: a struggling Japanese widow with three young children; a young Japanese female clerk; two Japanese medics; a young German priest; and a Japanese pastor. In his story for the *New Yorker*, Hersey recounted—in minute, painful detail—the day of the bombing from each of these six survivors' point of view.

"They still wondered why they lived when so many others died," Hersey wrote. That day and since, each had seen "more death than he ever thought he would see."

Through their eyes, Hersey also made Americans see more death than they ever thought they would see—and a new, uniquely awful version of death at that. As people read "Hiroshima," they visualized New York or Detroit or Seattle in Hiroshima's stead, and imagined their own families and friends and children enduring the same hell on earth. Just as Hersey had managed to access Hiroshima itself against the odds, he had successfully breached the fatigue—and tribal barriers—and broken them down. Almost miraculously, he had managed to trigger empathy.

The simplicity of his approach—premised on portraying six relatable people whose lives were violently upended at the same moment—mirrored the basic power of the tiny, mighty atom itself.

The U.S. government's attempt to suppress information about Hiroshima had been almost ridiculous, Hersey felt; equally absurd was the government's bid to retain its initial nuclear monopoly. Sooner or later (and likely sooner, he thought) other countries were bound to figure out the physics, and it was only a matter of time before the truth about Hiroshima and Nagasaki got out. Yet, before he had personally gotten into Japan—ten months after the bombings—the American media had already essentially given up on trying to break the story of Hiroshima in a significant way, essentially giving Hersey an unlikely monopoly on the story.

Hersey's article had been released into a frenetic news landscape, with hundreds of stories and international developments vying for reporters' and the public's attention. The American press corps was in relentless pursuit of the next scoop, obsessed with getting the edge on the next big story. Dozens of foreign correspondents had been dispatched by their news organizations to Tokyo since the Japanese surrender a year earlier. Occupation authorities had indeed largely managed to squelch the few bold early attempts to cover Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and they closely monitored and controlled Japan-based reporters after that point. Yet, as time went on, many of Hersey's reporter colleagues had started to lose interest in reporting on Hiroshima's fate anyway; it started to seem like yesterday's news, and they directed their attention to other stories. Back home, their editors were quietly asked to submit press reports about nuclear matters to the War Department; failure to do so could compromise national security, they were advised. They largely complied.

The *New Yorker*'s founder and editor, Harold Ross, had directed his wartime writers to find consequential, hiding-in-plain-sight stories ignored by other reporters. Hersey took note, and when the *New Yorker* released "Hiroshima," the story not only had the feel of an exposé, but it appeared to be the scoop of the century. (The story had certainly been treated that way in-house at the magazine: Ross and his managing editor, William Shawn, kept the "Hiroshima" project strictly under wraps—going to almost absurdly dramatic lengths to keep it secret even from the magazine's own staffers—until just before the article's release.) When Hersey's story came out, the media reaction was frenzied: "Hiroshima" made front-page news around the world and was covered on more than five hundred radio stations in the United States alone—even though Hersey's feat revealed that every

other press outlet had actually missed the huge story that they had *seemed* to cover so diligently.

The public relations fallout created by "Hiroshima" also embarrassed the U.S. government, which scrambled to contain the damage. But once "Hiroshima" ran in the *New Yorker*, the genie could not be put back into the bottle. Now that the cover-up was blown, the reality of nuclear aftermath was a matter of permanent, policy-influencing international record. Hersey had made it impossible for Americans to avert their eyes and, as physicist Albert Einstein put it, "escape into easy comforts" again.

That said, the Manhattan Project's General Leslie Groves—who had played a central early role in distorting and hiding information about Hiroshima and the weapon he'd helped create—did play a surprising role in bringing "Hiroshima" to the masses. And the U.S. government and military would find their own unlikely and cynical utility in the article once it had been published. While Hersey's article had indeed embarrassed the United States, some government figures realized that it wasn't entirely a bad thing that "Hiroshima" had showcased, to great effect, the devastating power of the United States' new weapon—a most unwelcome reminder to America's rivals, who were still years away from developing their own nuclear weapons. (To that end, the Soviets deeply resented "Hiroshima" and its author; their hostility became increasingly vehement over time. Actions were taken in Russia to debunk Hersey's revelations, smear Hersey himself, and downplay the might of America's new bombs.) In retrospect, the "Hiroshima" story reveals much about the U.S. government's internal conflict over how much to showcase about the atomic bomb and how much to hide about it at all costs.

Whatever import "Hiroshima" took on in various realms, Hersey and his editors at the *New Yorker* always saw the article as a document of conscience. Also released almost immediately in book form around the world and in many languages, "Hiroshima"—with its continued ability to engulf readers emotionally—has sold millions of copies and long acted as a pillar of deterrence. Years later, Hersey would comment on the role that such eyewitness testimonies had played in keeping subsequent generations of leaders from incinerating the planet. It "has not been deterrence, in the sense of fear of specific weapons," he said, "so much as it's been memory. The memory of what happened at Hiroshima."

Most journalistic works have short shelf lives. Yet "Hiroshima" is dated in only one respect: the story's hell-wreaking main character, Little Boy, was already considered primitive by the time Hersey wrote his 1946 story just months after the bomb's detonation. The United States had already begun developing the hydrogen bomb, which would prove many times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. Today's nuclear arsenals include hundreds of bombs vastly more powerful than Little Boy or Fat Man. (The most powerful nuclear device—called the Tsar Bomba, detonated by the Soviets in 1961—was reportedly 1,570 times more powerful than the yield of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined, and ten times more powerful than all of the conventional weapons exploded during World War II.) It is estimated that the world's current combined inventory of nuclear arms includes more than 13,500 warheads. Should war break out today, the prognosis for civilization's survival is grim; as Einstein said after the Japan bombings: "I do not know how the Third World War will be fought, but I can tell you what they will use in the Fourth—rocks."

Recently, climate change has been dominating headlines and conversations as *the* existential threat to human survival; yet nuclear weapons continue to pose the other great existential threat—and that threat is accelerating. Climate change promises to rework the world violently yet gradually. Nuclear war could spell instantaneous global destruction, with little or no advance warning. Hersey had, in the 1980s, worried about "slippage"—a hair-trigger mistake or misinterpretation between two nuclear powers that could lead to an immediate, irreversible nuclear confrontation. If such "slippage" occurred now, leaders could, in a matter of minutes, incite events that would wipe out all life on earth.

Long-standing barriers to such nuclear conflagrations are weakening. Leaders of nuclear-armed nations are once again accelerating production on and modernizing their nuclear arsenals. International treaties restricting such escalation are being abandoned. North Korea has been provocatively testing missiles while the United States occasionally rattles its saber in reply—but essentially looks the other way; Turkey is now vying to join the nuclear club. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, a nuclear watchdog group, has reset its Doomsday Clock—which gauges the world's proximity to the possibility of nuclear war—to "100 seconds to midnight," with midnight meaning nuclear apocalypse. The clock has never been that close

to midnight—not even in 1953, "the most dangerous year of the Cold War," says Dr. William J. Perry, former U.S. secretary of defense and chair of the *Bulletin*'s board of sponsors. "The world is in an even more dangerous position today; the possibility of nuclear catastrophe is greater. And nothing is being done to reduce the dangers."

Experts maintain that climate change is contributing to this dangerous nuclear landscape, and civil wars sparked in part by environmental upheaval are a factor in forcing refugee movements in record numbers, exacerbating tensions among nations. To make matters even worse, the sort of virulent nationalism and racism that helped set the stage for World War II —and which Hersey had worked so hard to break down with "Hiroshima"—is flaring up around the world. Much of this racism is on display and escalating on social media. Americans are proving far from immune to this trend of dehumanization; for example, many have indicated that they would now be willing to inflict extreme mass casualties on civilians of an enemy state via preemptive nuclear attack. A recent survey of 3,000 Americans revealed that a third of those surveyed supported such a strike, even if that meant a million North Korean civilians would die as in the attack. "It's our best chance of eliminating North Koreans," stated one strike supporter. The purpose of the strike, according to another: "to end North Korea."

In 1946, Hersey wrote that his protagonists did not yet understand why they had survived the Hiroshima bombing while tens of thousands of others around them had perished. Part of the reason, Hersey felt, was to warn future generations about the cruel impact of a bomb that continues to kill long after it is detonated, and to help ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again. He hoped that his documentation of Hiroshima's fate would continue to serve as a deterrent. But if the lesson of Hiroshima was ignored or forgotten, he warned, continued human existence was indeed a "Big If."

Chapter One

The Picture Does Not Tell the Whole Story

LIMBO

New York City, May 8, 1945. Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day. German forces in Europe had just surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. Hitler had killed himself a week earlier. After years of bloodshed and destruction, the war in Europe was over at last.

A quarter of a million of people crowded into Times Square. Over a thousand tons of paper—ripped newsprint, torn telephone book pages, anything shreddable—showered down from windows in the surrounding buildings into the streets below. On Wall Street, a blizzard of ticker tape swirled in the air. Boats on the Hudson and East Rivers blew their horns, which mingled with the cheering on land to produce a joyous, deafening cacophony.

John Hersey had more than one reason to celebrate that day. Not only was he likely exulting along with other New Yorkers about the end of hostilities in Europe—which he had covered on various fronts as a war correspondent—but he also received some very good personal news. He and his friend Richard Lauterbach, a correspondent for *Time* and *Life* magazines, were playing tennis at Rip's Tennis Courts in midtown Manhattan, near the East River, tucked away from the Times Square revelries. One of the court staffers came out of the club shed onto the court and hollered at Hersey.

"I just heard on the radio that you won the Pulitzer Prize," he said.

Hersey didn't believe it. After a beat, he turned to his friend on the court.

“Lauterbach, you bastard, you’re trying to pull a fast one on me,” he told him. “I know it!”

Lauterbach apparently didn’t try to dissuade Hersey that he was being pranked. The men played out the rest of the set. When, later that day, Hersey returned home to his Park Avenue apartment, where he lived with his wife and their three young children, he discovered that he actually *had* won a Pulitzer Prize for his 1944 novel, *A Bell for Adano*.

Even before this accolade, Hersey—just thirty years old when he won the Prize—had already had an enviable career. A respected international correspondent for *Time* magazine throughout the war, he was also a war hero. The secretary of the navy had personally sent him a note of commendation after Hersey had helped evacuate wounded Marines while on assignment covering a battle between Japanese and Allied forces in the Solomon Islands. (“I should have sent it back,” Hersey later said. “My alacrity in helping to get the wounded out was my way of taking the quickest possible exit from that hellhole.”) Before *A Bell for Adano* was published in 1944, he had already authored two other well-received books: *Men on Bataan* (1942), a biography of General Douglas MacArthur and his forces, who had since been painfully fighting their way, island by island, up through the Pacific toward Japan; and *Into the Valley* (1943), which depicted the bloody dogfight he’d survived on Guadalcanal. Even before earning Hersey the Pulitzer, *A Bell of Adano*—which depicted a Sicily-based American major who tries to help locals find a replacement for the seven-hundred-year-old town bell that had been melted down for bullets by Fascists—had already been adapted into both a movie and a Broadway play.

Once the Pulitzer was bestowed upon him, Hersey’s literary star rose even higher. Critics compared him to Hemingway. He and his wife, Frances Ann—a wealthy, educated Southern-born-and-raised beauty who had been presented at the Court of St. James’s in London—were leading a glamorous life. The film version of *A Bell for Adano* was released just weeks after V-E Day, in June. There was an invitation to the White House; powerful gossip columnist Walter Winchell mentioned him in his column.

Despite the fanfare, however, Hersey maintained a relatively low profile and an attractive sense of humility. For years, friends and colleagues would cite that humbleness as one of his defining characteristics and puzzle over its origin. After all, he had been almost excessively celebrated throughout his life. Enrolled as a scholarship student at The Hotchkiss School—a posh

Connecticut boarding school—he was, in his senior year, voted "most popular member of the class" and also the "most influential." When he moved on to Yale University, he was tapped for the exclusive Skull and Bones society, which boasted presidents, diplomats, and publishing moguls among its alums.

The humility may have come from his early background: Hersey had been born in China to American missionaries. While not religious himself, his reserve and pronounced moral compass were likely rooted in that upbringing, along with his staunch aversion to self-promotion. Amidst the acclaim of his early career, Hersey would find personal attention "hollow," one of his sons would recall later, and developed an early antipathy to "flogging his wares." As Hersey's career developed, he always preferred instead to "let his works speak for themselves," added one of his daughters. He lived in the spotlight and yet he seemed—to the public, anyway—something of a cipher. This suited him just fine.

Despite his celebrity that summer, Hersey was at a professional crossroads. He had recently returned to the United States from Moscow, where he had opened the *Time* bureau in 1944 after covering various theaters of war for that magazine since 1939. It had been a frustrating, complicated assignment. Hersey had been at loggerheads not only with his Soviet hosts but also with his boss, Time Inc. cofounder and editor Henry Luce. The Soviets had confined and monitored Hersey and the other Western correspondents based in Moscow; he and his fellow reporters had, Hersey remembered, spent most of their time drinking at the Metropol hotel while trying "to catch a glimpse of the war, which was several hundred miles away."

Luce, for his part, despised the Soviets—then wartime allies of the United States—and communism. In his opinion the twentieth century belonged rightfully to America, democracy, and free enterprise. He and his top editor in New York rarely printed anything that Hersey wrote from the Russian capital, and when they did, they rewrote and edited Hersey's stories so egregiously that Hersey grew angry and threatened to quit; at one point he reportedly told Luce to his face that "there was as much truthful reporting in *Pravda*"—then the mouthpiece of the Soviet government—as there was in *Time*. This relationship deterioration was a regrettable development for Luce, who—despite muzzling the Russia dispatches—had

actually hoped to groom Hersey for a leadership role in Time Inc.'s expanding and influential magazine empire.

The *Time* boss had long been somewhat narcissistically fixated on Hersey. The two men shared bizarrely similar backgrounds: like Hersey, Luce had been born in China to American missionary parents (making them "mishkids," as Hersey put it); and like Hersey, he had been educated as a scholarship student at Hotchkiss and Yale. The one nominal digression in their educational résumés: Luce had undertaken postgraduate studies at Oxford University, and Hersey at Cambridge.

For Hersey, Luce had seemed, at first, a "walking wonder of possibilities," although he later downgraded the nature of the relationship to "quasi-parental." When he made it clear that he intended to quit, Luce panicked and tried to lure Hersey home to begin training him for *Time*'s managing editorship. The eleventh-hour seduction attempt failed. Hersey resigned on July 11, 1945, and returned to New York.

As the summer of 1945 stretched before him, Hersey was evaluating his options. He was now a freelancer instead of heir apparent to a publishing empire. Many of his journalist friends and colleagues remained overseas, covering the winding down of Hitler's defeated killing machine and the aftermath of the European conflict. The Pacific war continued to rage, and a feeling of queasy anxiety quickly settled back over New York City. Even during the V-E Day celebrations there, the shadow of still-undefeated Japan soured the festivities. Some revelers had tried to put a good face on the specter, carrying signs proclaiming:

"On to Tokyo!"

"On to Japan!"

"Two down, One to Go!"

The prognosis for beating Japan was at once encouraging and grim. That country's navy had been devastated; the Allies had gained territorial footholds from which they could conduct air raids over the Japanese mainland. Late that winter, a firebombing air raid over Tokyo had burned 16 square miles of the Japanese capital in a single night. Yet the Japanese showed no apparent sign of surrendering. Hersey, like many other Americans, feared that a Japanese land invasion would be necessary, with horrific casualties on both sides.

"I had been under fire in skirmishes against the Japanese, and had come to know how very tenacious and how very dedicated they were," he said.

The U.S. War Department had announced that it would begin diverting veterans of the European campaigns to the Pacific. Many of Hersey's fellow war correspondents now flocked to cover the Pacific campaigns as well, and embedded with Allied forces there. Among them was Bill Lawrence of the *New York Times*, who had been posted in Moscow with Hersey. Lawrence wrote to his editors and to Hersey about his different assignments, keeping them in the loop from afar. He and Hersey had been drinking buddies in Russia; Lawrence was a "bear of a man, lusty, the darling of the Katinkas" who had once passed out at a banquet in Leningrad and had to be dragged feetfirst out of the hall.

Lawrence's new assignment—covering the Allied invasion of Okinawa—was far more sobering. The fighting had been slow and excruciating, he reported back to New York; on the island he had witnessed U.S. aircraft spraying cave-filled hills with napalm and igniting the areas in what "the G.I.s called… 'Jap Barbecues.'" Otherwise, the fighting would have involved cave-to-cave, hand-to-hand combat. In Lawrence's opinion, the war with the Japanese was bound to last for years, and he saw no evidence that the will of Japanese soldiers was weakening. The U.S. military was preparing for an amphibious assault on Japan for the fall of 1945.

"Few of us in the Pacific knew… that our war was about to end," Lawrence later recalled. By mid-July, back in the United States, the first atomic bomb in history had been successfully—and secretly—detonated in the New Mexico desert; the bombs ultimately destined for Hiroshima and Nagasaki were being prepared.

A NEW AND MOST CRUEL BOMB

On August 6, 1945, Hersey was in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, when he heard President Truman announce on the radio that the United States had used an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This new weapon, the president declared, drew its terrible power from the basic powers of the universe. "The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East," he said. If the Japanese did not submit unconditionally to the surrender terms already issued by Allied leaders the previous month at the Potsdam Conference, they could expect obliteration. More atomic bombs were in development, Truman advised,

including even more powerful versions. The United States would continue to drop them, one after another, he said, until Japan capitulated.

Unlike Bill Lawrence, Hersey actually had heard about atomic bombs while still at *Time* magazine, so the news wasn't as bewildering to him as it was for almost everyone else. Most of the country and world had been kept in the dark about the $2 billion nuclear undertaking to create these nuclear weapons. Tens of thousands of people had worked on the Manhattan Project in covert locations across the United States without knowing exactly what they were constructing. American pilots had trained in Utah and the Pacific for a bombing mission whose details and goal were unknown to them: they had not "the slightest inkling of the nature of their job," recalled one observer at Tinian, the Pacific island base from which the Hiroshima bombardment team had taken off. "All of them had been asked to volunteer for an organization that was 'going to do something different.' That was all." President Truman hadn't even known about the project until the death of his predecessor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in April 1945, a mere three months before the first bomb was successfully tested in New Mexico.

Upon hearing the news about Hiroshima, Hersey was immediately overwhelmed by a sense of despair. It wasn't a feeling of guilt—or even, at first, compassion for Hiroshima's victims—but rather an overarching fear about the world's future. It was instantly clear to him that humanity had suddenly entered a terrifying new chapter. Yet he also felt relieved: the Hiroshima bomb—as horrible as it must have been, and as worrisome in its implications—would likely end the war at last.

His relief disintegrated three days later when the United States dropped a second atomic bomb on Japan, this time on the port city of Nagasaki. Hersey was appalled. This second nuclear attack was an indefensible excess, in his opinion, a "totally criminal" action that resulted in tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths.

"We gave the Japanese a demonstration that was terrible," he later recalled, adding that he felt "sure that one bomb would have brought the Japanese surrender." The incendiary raids on cities in Japan—and Germany—had already seemed morally reprehensible to him, but the atomic bomb had just added "a terrifying factor of efficiency" to humanity's ability to inflict mass casualties in warfare.

Publications around the world began to print photographs of the ghoulish mushroom clouds that had appeared over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A *New*

York Times reporter who had accompanied the Nagasaki bombing run described the cloud emerging from that obliterated city as a "living totem pole, carved with many grotesque masks grimacing at the earth." From the vast mushroom cloud emerged a smaller mushroom cloud, "as though the decapitated monster was growing a new head." The bombing crew could still see the cloud from 200 miles away.

Now the world was waiting to hear and see what Hiroshima and Nagasaki looked like on the ground. "An impenetrable cloud of dust and smoke masked the target area from reconnaissance planes," the *New York Times* reported on August 7, and therefore "what happened at Hiroshima is not yet known. The War Department said it 'as yet was unable to make an accurate report.'"

Allied correspondents and editors awaited the initial reports on the fate of those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those based in the Pacific monitored Japanese press and radio stations for any dispatches describing the fate of the atomic cities. But the Japanese media had been instructed by Japanese intelligence to downplay the attacks. ("Hiroshima was attacked by incendiary bombs," read one article in *Asahi Shimbun*, one of Japan's largest newspapers. "It seems that some damage was caused to the city and its vicinity.") The initial response in the publications was so subdued that U.S. officials worried that the Japanese had not yet fully comprehended their situation.

That said, there was at least one Tokyo radio report, heard at the American base at Guam, stating that not one but several "parachute-borne atomic bombs" had been dropped on Hiroshima. The report was picked up by the United Press wire service and created confusion about whether Washington's announcement or the enemy report was correct. The Japanese radio announcer added that "by employing a new weapon destined to massacre innocent civilians, the Americans have opened the eyes of the world to their sadistic nature."

Then, on August 15, an even more astonishing announcement was broadcast. Japan's Emperor Hirohito—considered a living god by his subjects, most of whom had never before heard him speak—informed his nation that, due to a "new and most cruel bomb" being used against the nation, Japan was surrendering to the Allies. (The surrender was billed as unconditional, but Hirohito was being permitted to remain in position as emperor—a concession previously denied by the Allied powers.) If the

Japanese continued to fight, the emperor continued, not only did the country face obliteration but the conflict could quite possibly lead "to [the] total extinction of human civilization."

Celebrations erupted around the world. The Victory over Japan Day, or V-J Day, celebrations in New York City dwarfed the V-E Day celebrations of May. Two million people jammed into Times Square and the surrounding streets this time. When the *New York Times* ran the words "Official—Truman announces Japanese surrender" across its electric zipper sign on the Times Tower there, "the victory roar… beat upon the eardrums until it numbed the senses," recalled one *Times* correspondent. The party was "instantaneous and wild," and the "metropolis exploded its emotions with atomic force." This time the joy had a harder edge to it. Nearly a thousand people were treated for injuries incurred in the celebrations. Fourteen thousand police plus air raid wardens, more than a thousand Navy shore patrolmen, and four companies of military police were called in to suppress "over-exuberance." Some revelers grew hysterical in the streets; others sobbed openly. Thousands crowded into churches and synagogues for services. American flags hung in store windows across the city and fluttered from balconies and fire escapes and cars; once again, shredded paper swirled like smoke in the air and piled up knee-high in the streets. Sailors and Army men fanned out in the streets, grabbing and kissing girls. More than a dozen effigies of Emperor Hirohito were strung up on light poles around the city and later cut down and burned; small boys toted handwritten placards proclaiming, "HANG THE EMPEROR." The next day the delirium began all over again.

Few seemed to share Hersey's qualms and distress about the means by which the Americans had brought the war to an end at last. A poll conducted the day after V-J Day revealed that the vast majority of those surveyed approved of the nuclear attacks on Japan. Nearly a quarter of those polled in a separate August survey stated that they wished the United States had been able to use even more atomic bombs on Japan before the emperor had surrendered.

THE FIRST-INS

American leaders immediately urged the public to look ahead instead of reflecting on the war. On the evening of V-J Day, New York City mayor Fiorello La Guardia broadcast a radio speech: it was indeed a moment for joy and rejoicing, but there was a great deal of work ahead, he said. Having "defeated and destroyed forever the Nazis, the Fascists, and now the Japs," he said, "we must live up to all that this means." The tasks of reconstructing and instilling democracy in Europe, and bringing postwar order to the United States, needed to begin "within an hour or two."

Many Americans, ecstatic but exhausted, were glad to leave behind the war's horrors and focus on the future. Yet not everyone was ready to move on so quickly from the final days and acts of the war. As the days and weeks went on, there was still little information published in the mainstream American press about the aftermath in Hiroshima and Nagasaki —mostly because Western journalists had not yet been able to get into Japan. Yet the Japanese media had now begun reporting freely on the aftermath of the bombings, and disturbing reports began to filter over to the United States about lingering radiation killing off survivors of the blasts. The timing could not have been worse: U.S. forces were converging upon the Japanese islands, preparing to move tens of thousands of occupation troops into the country—including the atomic cities.

Then, on August 31, 1945—more than three weeks after the Hiroshima bombing—the *New York Times* ran an account by the first Western journalist to get into that city. Former United Press (UP) journalist Leslie Nakashima—who had before the war possessed both American and Japanese citizenship and been stranded in Japan for the duration of the conflict—had gotten into Hiroshima on August 22 to search for his Japanese mother amid the ruins. (She had been on the outskirts of the city when the bomb was dropped, and survived.) On August 27, UP, a wire service (whose name later became UPI), had run and distributed his eyewitness account of what he had seen there. The city of 300,000 had vanished, Nakashima reported. Not a single building had been left standing intact; Hiroshima was a horrific landscape of rubble and ash.

In his original UP story, Nakashima also reported that Little Boy had not finished its handiwork on August 6. Blast survivors "continu[e] to die daily from burns suffered from the bomb's ultra-violet rays," he reported, adding that "the majority of the cases [at surviving hospitals] are held to be hopeless." Many of the survivors he saw had been burned beyond

recognition. Wild rumors were now circulating there about the true nature of the American bomb: that the uranium it had given off had seeped into Hiroshima's ground; that the city would be uninhabitable for the next seventy-five years; that the radiation poisoning being suffered by blast survivors came from "inhalation of the bomb's gas." Nakashima reported that he personally had "inhaled uranium" and had since been suffering from exhaustion and total loss of appetite.

Four days later, buried on its fourth page, the *New York Times* ran an abbreviated version of Nakashima's UP account—omitting nearly all references to radiation and uranium poisoning, and adding an editor's note stating that "United States scientists say the atomic bomb will not have any lingering after-effects in the devastated area." The heavily edited story now indicated that victims were dying solely of burns and injuries incurred from the blast, not radiation poisoning. Also, immediately below this story, the *Times* ran an item headlined "Japanese Reports Doubted," in which the head of the Manhattan Project, Lieutenant General Leslie Groves, was described as contending that "Japanese reports of death from radioactive effects of atomic bombing are pure propaganda."

"I think our best answer to anyone who doubts this is that we did not start the war," General Groves added, "and if they don't like the way we ended it, to remember who started it."

Yet a few days later, in early September, another harrowing initial press report emerged. Now that the U.S. occupation forces were entering Japan, scores of foreign reporters were getting in too. Several tough accredited Allied war correspondents now vied for the first major breakthrough story from the ground in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Australian war reporter Wilfred Burchett, of London's *Daily Express*, managed to make it into Hiroshima, even though Western correspondents had been forbidden by occupation authorities to travel throughout the country. Burchett had come into Japan on a Marine-laden U.S. freighter from Okinawa and promptly boarded a train to the atomic city, which looked to him like it had been not just bombed but steamrolled. The *Daily Express* ran his findings under a banner headline proclaiming "THE ATOMIC PLAGUE."

This was his "warning to the world," Burchett wrote, about the true nature of the bomb. (What he had seen, as he later put it, was not just the end of World War II but "the fate of cities all over the world in the first hours of a World War III.") The physical devastation had been just

staggering, unfathomable. Not only had the entire city been pulverized, the Japanese reports about radiation poisoning were not lies or propaganda after all. He had personally witnessed evidence to the contrary. Thirty days after the bombing, people in Hiroshima were still dying "mysteriously and horribly"—including people who had been uninjured by the blast. Their hair was falling out; they were bleeding from their ears, noses, and mouths. Helpless doctors were administering vitamin A injections, only to see their patients' flesh rot away from the injection holes; in every case, the victim died, Burchett reported. Doctors had no idea what was causing the "plague" but suspected that "it is given off by the poisonous gas still issuing from the earth soaked with radioactivity by the split uranium atom." The newspaper ran an aerial shot of the devastated city, with a caveat heading: "THE PICTURE THAT DOES NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY."

That same day—September 5—the *New York Times* reversed course and ran its own story from the ground in Hiroshima—this time on its front page and written by Hersey's friend, Bill Lawrence. Hiroshima was indeed the world's "WORST DAMAGED CITY," the headline proclaimed. Lawrence reported that he had "never looked upon such scenes of destruction." In the air hung "the awful, sickening odor of death." He confirmed Burchett's account that blast survivors were indeed suffering from an awful affliction; the bomb had mysterious, terrifying, lingering effects after all. Symptoms included soaring fevers, dramatic hair loss, near-total loss of white blood corpuscles, and lost appetites, and most of the victims "vomited blood and finally died."

But then the *Times* and Lawrence appeared to quickly backtrack. Less than a week after his "Worst Damaged City" story was published, Lawrence had a new article out, with the section header "FOE SEEKS TO WIN SYMPATHY."

In the story, Lawrence wrote that he was now convinced that "horrible as the bomb undoubtedly is, the Japanese are exaggerating its effects… in an effort to win sympathy for themselves in an attempt to make the American people forget the long record of cold-blooded Japanese bestiality." It was a bewildering retreat. Something was clearly going on behind the scenes.

THE RIGHT KIND OF PUBLICITY

If Hersey had been distressed at the time of the bombings, the initial press reports out of Hiroshima only made him more uneasy and upset. Not long after Bill Lawrence's first Hiroshima report appeared in the *New York Times*, Hersey received a letter from him. Despite the horrors he had just witnessed and reported on, Lawrence was giddy over his initial aftermath scoop.

"Most of it has landed on [page one] of the New York Times, a newspaper which you may read from time to time," he bragged to Hersey. "The atomic bomb was all that everybody said it was," he went on, "except I don't think that it leaves any lingering radio activity. At least I hope not. At least I hope it doesn't make everybody sterile. At least I hope it doesn't make me that way."

Lawrence told Hersey that he had accessed Hiroshima not as an independent reporter, as Wilfred Burchett had, but rather as part of a government junket, staged by an air force press relations officer. That July, just ahead of the Japan bombings, a select group of newspaper and radio correspondents and still and newsreel photographers had been urgently summoned to the Pentagon. Lawrence was among the chosen, along with correspondents from the Associated Press, United Press, the *New York Times*, NBC, CBS, and ABC, among other outlets.

At the Pentagon, they had been greeted by Lieutenant Colonel John Reagan "Tex" McCrary, a reporter turned public relations officer for the U.S. Army Air Force. Reporters would later recall Lieutenant Colonel McCrary—born on a Texas ranch called Wildcat Farm—as dynamic and jaunty. The consummate showman, McCrary would later become a radio and television personality, and help pioneer the morning talk show format.

Lieutenant Colonel McCrary informed the gathered reporters that they had been selected for the greatest assignment of the war. ("What, another?" one reporter scoffed.) He had been instructed by his superiors to showcase to reporters the air force's handiwork during the war, but there was, reporters were told, another story that they had been selected to cover: an "earth-shaking event which would change the course of history, [something that] was ultra-ultra secret" and would take place in the Pacific. Apparently it had been decided that *some* publicity for America's new bomb—the right sort of highly controlled publicity—was necessary. The story of the bomb's extreme destructiveness—and therefore the United States' new, powerful

status as creator and sole possessor of the bomb—needed to be showcased to its allies and adversaries alike.

McCrary had not been involved in the Manhattan Project beyond having asked General Groves if he could go on the Hiroshima bombing mission. (His request was declined.) His own mission was to be more of a luxe conflict-aftermath sightseeing tour for the reporters. The McCrary junket would take place on two gleaming Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses—which McCrary had dubbed the *Headliner* (whose name was painted in black capital letters across the plane's nose) and the *Dateliner*—which had been outfitted with plush seats, desks, lamps, and then state-of-the-art long-range radio transmitters. Above Lieutenant Colonel McCrary's desk hung a CENSORED stamp.

The junket had begun in Europe, so the reporters could survey the bomb damage in Europe's cities. They could then eventually "compare it with the damage in Japan after we defeat[ed] Japan," recalled one reporter, and therefore emphasize its comparative magnitude. The junket had just started making its way to Asia when, on August 6, they got the news of the Hiroshima bombing along with the rest of the world. By the end of the month, the *Headliner* and the *Dateliner* had converged upon Japan as part of the first wave of the press corps. Lieutenant Colonel McCrary had the planes flown over Nagasaki so the reporters could behold the devastation from above. They were encouraged to transmit their first impressions back to their news outlets right away.

"I ad-libbed my report to the *Times* into a microphone as our aircraft circled Nagasaki, and my military censor, Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Schneider, an intelligence officer based on Guam, sat close beside me to listen," Bill Lawrence recalled later. "Colonel Schneider actually assisted me in framing the report by providing military intelligence descriptions of Nagasaki's appearance before it had been hit."

McCrary's goal at Nagasaki had been to get the press to report on the atomic bombing without getting too graphic or revealing too much about the aftermath. Even when the junket was taken into devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki a few days later, the correspondents were allowed only a few hours on the ground in each place. They were horrified by what they saw. Hiroshima was a decimated "death laboratory" littered with the corpses of "human guinea pigs," recalled one McCrary junketeer later. As they walked through rubble and ashes of the city, the McCrary reporters actually ran into

Australian correspondent Wilfred Burchett of the *Daily Express*, who had then been typing his "Atomic Plague" article furiously on his portable Hermes typewriter in the middle of the smoldering ruins. Burchett was contemptuous of this group of "housetrained reporters" who were simply "being rewarded for [their] faithful rewrites of the Washington headquarters communiqués" with the promise of the greatest scoop in history: a first look at the results of America's new war-winning weapon. What they had actually been selected for, Burchett later wrote, was participation in a cover-up of outsized proportions.

When describing his junket experience in his letter to Hersey, Bill Lawrence left quite a bit out. He did not mention that when they reboarded the *Headliner* to file their Hiroshima reports, Lieutenant Colonel McCrary instructed the reporters to downplay the grotesque details of what they had seen there, as Americans were "not ready for it back home." Nor did Bill Lawrence tell Hersey in the letter that when the junketeers got back to Tokyo, General MacArthur—now Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and effectively Japan's new emperor—and his officers were quickly clamping down on both the Japanese and foreign media. Enraged by the McCrary mission, General MacArthur was said to be threatening to court-martial the entire entourage. Despite the onboard censoring, some of those initial published reports filed by the McCrary junketeers via the *Headliner*'s transmitter—including Bill Lawrence's first article for the *New York Times*—had flagrantly crossed the line from good bomb PR into bad PR. Even worse, Wilfred Burchett's independent "Atomic Plague" story for the *Daily Express* had also just broken and was creating a worldwide outcry. (It had been a miracle that Burchett had gotten his story out in the first place: the article had had to be transmitted from Hiroshima to a Burchett colleague in Tokyo via a Morse code handset.)

U.S. government officials in both Tokyo and Washington, D.C., realized that the press and the story needed to be managed—immediately. U.S. forces in Japan quickly declared the atomic cities off-limits to reporters and corralled them into what Burchett called a "press ghetto" in Yokohama, a landing point for U.S. forces. Occupation authorities stationed sentries on the bridges over the river running between Yokohama and Tokyo. They found other ways to punish Wilfred Burchett when he returned to Tokyo from Hiroshima. Hospitalized after exhibiting what appeared to be symptoms of radiation poisoning, Burchett brought along his camera,

whose film was full of images of Hiroshima's devastation; it went mysteriously missing during his hospital stay. When he emerged, he found that "General MacArthur had withdrawn my press accreditation," he recalled later. "I was to be expelled from Japan for having gone 'beyond the boundaries of "his" occupation zone without permission.'"

Now installed and getting organized in Tokyo, General MacArthur's censors had wised up fast, and a few days later they managed to shut down what would have been yet another damaging report from a third foreign reporter. A pugnacious American war correspondent named George Weller —*Time* magazine had once described him as the "much machine-gunned George Weller"—had separately made his way into Nagasaki, and had been attempting to report to his newspaper, the *Chicago Daily News*, on the devastation there.

Weller had zero respect for General MacArthur's restrictions and censors. "I had a right to be in Nagasaki, closed or not," Weller said later. "Four weeks after the two bombs, with no riots or resistance in Japan, it seemed reasonable that MacArthur should lift his snuffer from the two cities.… I was not going to be stifled." If Lieutenant Colonel McCrary had warned that Americans weren't ready for the truth about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Weller believed exactly the opposite. What the United States badly needed, he thought, was "a long cold bath of reality"—not just its government, but its citizens.

Like Wilfred Burchett, Weller had managed to sneak away from General MacArthur's occupation troops and had even impersonated an American colonel to get local Japanese police to protect and assist him in his reporting. Once on the ground in Nagasaki, he had remained there for days, and during that time wrote 10,000 words describing, in graphic detail, a sinister "Disease X" ravaging blast survivors. (Ironically, like Burchett, he encountered the McCrary press junket when it dipped in and out of Nagasaki. To Weller, the reporters looked "like yacht passengers who have stopped to buy basketry on an island.") Still posing as a colonel, he had conscripted the services of Japanese Kempeitai, or military police, to transport his copy up to Tokyo for transmission back to the United States. The censors in Tokyo were apparently not as naïve as his messengers, for Weller's dispatches were apparently intercepted, rejected, and then "lost."

All of this information would come out much later. But in the meantime, all that Bill Lawrence's letter told Hersey on September 10 was that the

McCrary junket had been quite a “party,” a “fabulous trip.” He would be back in the States soon. At the moment, however, he was still sitting on the panel-walled *Headliner* B-17 as he wrote the missive to Hersey, enjoying a view of Mount Fuji.

“I have been having the time of my life,” he said to Hersey. “Jealous, bud?”

Whether Hersey was jealous of Lawrence’s Hiroshima access and coverage at the time is unknown. But even during those early weeks after the bombing, he knew that something was deeply awry in the story of Hiroshima as it was presented to the public. “As a journalist,” he later recalled, he would have “no choice but to write about the world that was born [when the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima].” It was just a matter of time.

Acknowledgments

Researching and writing *Fallout* has been the greatest honor of my professional life, yet it was a herculean effort that required the help and support of many people. My editor, Eamon Dolan, and literary agents, Molly Friedrich and Lucy Carson, helped me conceive and shape this project from its earliest stages and were closely involved throughout its evolution. *Fallout* could have been 250 pages or it could have been 1,000; with each subsequent draft, Eamon shrewdly helped bring out the narrative from a mountain of material, and charmed his way through ordering often painful cuts to the manuscript. Molly and Lucy provided frequent, invaluable editorial input and encouragement.

Research for *Fallout* was conducted on three continents in four languages. I am particularly grateful to my primary Russian translator and researcher, Anastasiya Osipova, who became my general research associate, flanking me at several archives and acting as my emissary to others; pulling documents, articles, and many other materials for me around the clock; and acting as a crucial sounding board throughout the research, writing, and editing of this book. I also owe a great debt to my Tokyo-based researcher and translator, Ariel Acosta, who also acted as an assistant to me during my time in Japan. Deepest thanks to my German translator-researchers, Professor Sigi Leonhard and Nadja Leonhard-Hooper, and to my longtime research associate Alison Forbes for her document and article research as well as her help in tracking down elusive contacts. Michael G. Bracey provided essential research from the National Archives and Records Administration and patiently helped me and my team navigate the overwhelming SCAP, U.S. government, and U.S. military records there. Laura Casey helped fact-check the manuscript and provided important editorial input during the final stages of editing.

I was greatly honored to work with one of Hersey's last surviving "Hiroshima" protagonists: Koko Tanimoto Kondo, who personally guided

me through Hiroshima, showed me the exact point of Little Boy's detonation, gave me several lengthy interviews, and offered significant insight into the hibakusha community in Japan. She has since become a treasured friend, and I have dedicated this book to her. I also deeply appreciate the help and support of descendants of other protagonists in *Fallout*, including Pater Franz-Anton Neyer, nephew of Father Wilhelm Kleinsorge; Kazue Tokita and Natsuko Tokita, daughter and granddaughter of Leslie Nakashima; Michael McCrary; George Burchett; Anthony Weller; Jennet Conant; and Leslie Sussan.

I am deeply grateful to Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki of Hiroshima Prefecture for his interview and support, and to Dr. Yoichi Funabashi, chairman of the Asia Pacific Initiative, for his expertise and introductions within Japan. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Professor Kazumi Mizumoto of the Hiroshima Peace Institute for his interviews and for patiently answering many questions. Thank you to Matt Fuller for his tireless efforts in making introductions in Japan on my behalf and other essential support and guidance. John V. Roos and William F. Hagerty IV, both former U.S. ambassadors to Japan, gave deeply appreciated and crucial interviews, and I am grateful to Brooke Spelman of the U.S. embassy in Tokyo and David Mandis, executive assistant to Ambassador Hagerty, for their assistance.

Several board members and associates of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists supported this project, and I am deeply grateful for their help and guidance. Former U.S. secretary of defense William J. Perry and former California governor Jerry Brown both gave important interviews. Thank you also to Dr. Kennette Benedict for her crucial input, and to Janice Sinclaire for her tireless and deeply appreciated support. My thanks also to Robin Perry and Deborah Gordon of the William J. Perry Project, and to Evan Westrup.

I am also grateful for the support I received from members of the *New Yorker*'s team, past and present. My thanks to *New Yorker* editor-in-chief, David Remnick, for his interview and encouragement, and to *New Yorker* writer Adam Gopnik, who was an essential consultant from the project's conception. I would also like to thank John McPhee, John Bennet, Bill Whitworth, Sara Lippincott, Jane Kramer, Anne Mortimer-Maddox, Martin Baron, Richard Sacks, and Pat Keogh for their recollections, references, and/or guidance. Thank you also to Natalie Raabe for fielding many

questions throughout the research process, and to Fabio Bertoni for generously granting me permission to quote extensively from the *New Yorker*'s historical materials. Michael Gates Gill has my appreciation for his encouragement and information about his father's world at the *New Yorker* and Brendan Gill's friendship with Mr. Hersey, and to Susan Morrison for granting permission to use material from the Lillian Ross estate.

I was fortunate to have input from experts, biographers, and scholars in a wide array of fields throughout my research and writing. Thank you to Professor Martin Sherwin for his guidance on the Soviet Union and the bomb; to Dr. Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell for their interviews and help, and for their groundbreaking work on America's fraught relationship with Hiroshima; to Dr. Robert S. Norris for his essential assistance on information pertaining to General Leslie Groves; to Matt Korda, research associate of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), for his guidance on current nuclear weapon stockpiles worldwide and other historical technological facts about the atomic weapons detailed in this book; to Steven Aftergood, director of the FAS project on government secrecy; to Dr. William Burr, director of the National Security Archive's nuclear security documentation project; to Dr. Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at FAS; and to Richard Rhodes for his guidance on Albert Einstein's role in the creation of the bomb.

Thank you also to *New Yorker* biographer Ben Yagoda and Harold Ross biographer Thomas Kunkel for their support and feedback, and to Gay Talese for his expertise on the historical *New York Times* and for making many introductions for me. Professor Michael Yavenditti has my gratitude for his support and for helping me track down his important 1970 dissertation, "American Reactions to the Use of Atomic Bombs on Japan, 1945–1947." Thank you also to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan's Charles Pomeroy, a historian of foreign journalists in postwar Japan, for his help with many queries. I would also like to extend my appreciation to censorship historian Professor Michael Sweeney, First Amendment legal expert Jean-Paul Jassy, and film historian Professor Jeanine D. Basinger for her guidance on Japanese portrayal in World War II–era American commercial films, propaganda films, and military media materials. Thank you also to Professor Jian Wang, director of the USC Center on Public Diplomacy; to Willow Bay, dean of USC Annenberg

School for Communication and Journalism, and to USC professors Joe Saltzman and Geoffrey Cowan; and to Professor Aleksandar Matovski, Professor Thomas Kohut, Professor Jim Shepard, and Professor Eiko Maruko Siniawer—political science, film, and historical experts at my alma mater, Williams College.

My deepest thanks to the many archivists who helped me and my team research this project, including Jessica Tubis and Anne Marie Menta of Yale University Library's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library; Virginia T. Seymour of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin; Jeff Roth and Alain Delaqueriere of the New York Times Archives; James W. Zobel of the MacArthur Memorial Library & Archives; Jill Golden, director of the Life Photo Archive and Bill Hooper of the Time Inc. Archives; Eisha Neely of Cornell University's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections; David A. Olson, Hong Deng Gao, and Thai Jones of Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library; Meredith Mann of the New York Public Library's Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books division; Sarah Patton and Diana L. Sykes of Stanford University's Hoover Institution Library & Archives; Tricia Gesner and Francesca Pitaro of the Associated Press Corporate Archives; Emma M. Sarconi and Gabriel Swift of Princeton University Library's Rare Books and Special Collections; Abigail Malangone and Matt Porter of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library; Jeannie Rhodes, photography research director at *Vanity Fair*; Deirdre McCabe Nolan of the Condé Nast Library; Hiroko Moriwaki of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan; Randy Sowell and David Clark of the Harry S. Truman Library & Museum; Bill Landis and Christine Weideman of Yale University Library's Manuscripts and Archives; the reference staff of the Harvard University Archives; and Yael Hecht of the Beverly Hills Public Library.

For *Fallout*, I was allowed to reference previously unpublished materials, and I would like to gratefully acknowledge those who gave me access to and permission to quote from them, including Koko Tanimoto Kondo for sharing her family's historical photos with me and allowing me to excerpt from her father's unpublished diaries and letters; Scott, Bonnie, and Peter D. Sanders for unearthing and sharing notes from an interview conducted with Mr. Hersey by their father, pioneering Hersey biographer David Sanders; and Leslie Sussan for sharing with me a portion of her unpublished manuscript detailing her father's time in post-bomb Hiroshima.

Several contemporary journalists and producers provided contacts, support, and guidance on war reporting culture, including Tom Bettag, John Donvan, and Jack Laurence. My thanks to David Muir for his guidance on reporting from nuclear catastrophe zones. The team from *PBS NewsHour*/Facebook Watch's *That Moment When*, including Sara Just, James Blue, Dana Wolfe, Steve Goldbloom, and Melissa Williams, have my deepest appreciation for devoting an episode to the evolution of *Fallout* and the continued significance of the events that the book documents. *Time* magazine's Brian Bennett provided crucial insight, support, and contacts; his wife, Anne Tsai Bennett, made important State Department inroads for me. I am grateful to them both. Thank you also to *PBS NewsHour* senior national correspondent Amna Nawaz; *PBS NewsHour* deputy senior producer for foreign affairs and defense Dan Sagalyn; conflict journalist and author Gayle Tzemach Lemmon and her husband, Justin Lemmon, for their support and crucial introductions on my behalf; Chip Cronkite for his early support; ABC News correspondents Karen Travers and Gloria Riviera; Kirit Radia of the ABC News foreign desk; Patrick Reevell, Moscow-based contributor to ABC News; Elizabeth Angell of *Town & Country*; David Friend of *Vanity Fair*; Anya Strzemein of the *New York Times*; and Nicole Rudick, former editor at the *Paris Review*.

Some of Hersey's former friends, students, and colleagues generously shared their time and recollections with me, including Rose Styron, Margaret Blackstone, Jane O'Reilly, Phyllis Rose, David Wolkowsky, Ross Clairborne, Lynn Mitsuko Higashi Kaufelt, and Phil Caputo. I am grateful to each of them. My thanks to Nathaniel Sobel for sharing his Yale dissertation on Hersey and his research materials with me.

I would also like to thank my team at Simon & Schuster, including Tzipora Baitch for her tireless support, guidance, and organization; copy editor David Chesanow for undertaking the massive, complex task of vetting this work, and for doing so with such patience; senior designer Lewelin Polanco; Stephen Bedford of Simon & Schuster's marketing team; legal advisor Felice Javit; production editor Kathy Higuchi; senior publicist Brianna Scharfenberg and publicity director Julia Prosser; and cover designer Rich Hasselberger. Many thanks also to my film agent, Howie Sanders of Anonymous Content, and his associate, Tara Timinsky, for their great support from the earliest stages of my research. My London-based literary agent, Caspian Dennis, and Henry Rosenbloom, *Fallout*'s editor at

Scribe Publications, also have my greatest appreciation. Others who provided vital research support include Sasha Odynova, Moeko Fujii, and Annie Hamilton.

Thank you also to Lynn Novick; Sally Quinn; Masami Nishimoto of the *Chugoku Shimbun*; Dan Sloan of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan; Sophie Pinkham; Liesl Schillinger; Glynnis MacNicol; Mark Rozzo; Andy Lewis; Van Scott Jr. and Julie Townsend of ABC News; Michelle Press of Getty Images; Harvey Jason of Mystery Pier Books, Inc.; Hugues Garcia; Emily Lenzner; Courtney Dorning; Dr. Jeffrey Neely; Katelyn Massarelli; Alexander Littlefield and Taryn Roeder of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Julia Demchenko; Melissa Goldstein; Heather Carr; Kent Wolf; Lorin and Sadie Stein; Herb Johnson and Lise Angelica Johnson; Ene Riisna and James Greenfield; Alex Ward; Sarah Rosenberg, Melinda Arons; Jin Pace; Gillien Laub; Lori Dorr and Hasan Altaf of the *Paris Review*; Austin Mueller of the Wylie Agency; and the Princeton University Press Permissions Department.

Fallout was, in part, written to honor the memory of my father, who brought me up in a broadcast newsroom and was a passionate advocate for ethical and neutral journalism. And this book might not exist at all if not for a question posited by my husband and longtime collaborator, Gregory Macek, that set the entire project in motion. As with my last book, *Everybody Behaves Badly*, *Fallout* belongs as much to him as it does to me. It honors our mutual newsroom roots and celebrates the things we hold most sacred, today more than ever: truth seeking, decency, and honor.

About the Author

© KENDALL CONRAD

LESLEY M.M. BLUME is a Los Angeles– based journalist, author, and biographer. Her work has appeared in Vanity Fair, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Paris Review, among many other publications. Her last nonfiction book, Everybody Behaves Badly, was a New York Times bestseller.

SimonandSchuster.com
www.SimonandSchuster.com/Authors/Lesley-M-M-Blume
@simonbooks

We hope you enjoyed reading this Simon & Schuster ebook.

Get a FREE ebook when you join our mailing list. Plus, get updates on new releases, deals, recommended reads, and more from Simon & Schuster. Click below to sign up and see terms and conditions.

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

Already a subscriber? Provide your email again so we can register this ebook and send you more of what you like to read. You will continue to receive exclusive offers in your inbox.