

Faith from the Inferno



"Hiroshima Diary: The Journal of a Japanese Physician," by Michihiko Hachiya (translated and edited by Warner Wells, M.D., University of North Carolina Press. 238 pp. \$3.50), is the record of thoughts and acts between August 6 and September 30, 1945. It is reviewed here by Dr. William M. Hitzig, a practicing internist and diagnostician, a member of the staff of The Mount Sinai Hospital, New York City.

By William M. Hitzig, M.D.

EACH time has its own peculiarly appropriate horror. The horror of our time is the supreme symbol of our time—Hiroshima, the apex of modern science and of modern politics. Hiroshima is the strange and compelling summing-up of man's potential for growth and death.

Now comes a book which artlessly, and perhaps unintentionally, gives vivid life to this complex theme. Michihiko Hachiya, director of the Hiroshima Communications Hospital, his body disfigured, his society destroyed, his country defeated, his Emperor diminished, his science impotent, clearly and precisely documents the inferno. "Hiroshima Diary: The Journal of a Japanese Physician" is a chronicle of a descent into that inferno; but, most remarkable of all, it is a story of the capacity of man to return and survive.

In May of this year I spent several

hours with Dr. Hachiya at his hospital. His face is scarred. One of his arms has limited mobility (he cannot spare the time for surgical repair). His entire body is tattooed with souvenirs of the first bomb. And yet he seems obsessed with the idea that love and the capacity for love is the primary instrument of political and social life.

The night before I left Dr. Hachiya, in characteristic Japanese fashion, searched among his possessions for a departing gift to give me. He handed me a small box, no more than two inches long. Inside it, carefully wrapped, was a large fragment of windowpane glass, oxidized and fused by the blast into quartz-like opacity at one end. The fragment had been buried deep in the upper part of his thigh on August 6, 1945. When it was taken out, he kept it as something of a symbol of the change that had taken place in himself as the result of the explosion. His book reflects that change.

DR. HACHIYA does not merely report the holocaust and its consequences in his diary. He reveals the infinite dimensions of the struggle for survival. His day-to-day reports are documentary in nature—nothing is left out, nothing is concealed. The stink of hell is there. For the first time the incredible aftermath of the bomb is thoroughly revealed and explored—even the curious psychological patterns which find a man of science wondering at moments whether he has gone insane. Strange, macabre laughter; the sheer inability to find order

THE AUTHOR: Dr. Michihiko Hachiya, of Hiroshima, is a survivor of the *pika*. He had spent the early morning hours of August 6, 1945, at his air-raid post in the Hiroshima Communications Hospital, of which he was director, and finally knocked off at 4 A.M. The sky had been quiet. He went home—his home was roughly 4,500 feet from where the big bomb went off a few hours later—but, too restless to sleep, he absentmindedly lolled about in his underwear in the *hanareya*, a kind of room for contemplation. "Suddenly a strong flash of light startled me—and then another," he later recalled. For a split-second he wondered whether the flash was caused by a magnesium flare or maybe a passing trolley, but then all hell broke loose and he stopped wondering. Later, like two billion other upper vertebrates from Hiroshima to Hiroshima, he learned what the flash was all about. *Pika*, in Japanese, means a glitter, a sparkle, a flash of light, and the word has come to mean the A-bombing of Hiroshima. Dr. Hachiya chronicled his own as well as his city's recuperation on bits of paper. Twenty-two days after the *pika* a friend of his dropped in at the shattered hospital and asked how the diary was going. "You know what difficulty I have as a writer," he replied, remembering his "Daruma to Tora," a clinical diary. "I have the same trouble this time. Perhaps more, because I am out of practice and so many things distract me." Some years later Dr. Hachiya was persuaded to serialize his diary in the *Teishin Igaku*, a medical journal. It was about then—1951—that he met Dr. Warner Wells, of North Carolina, of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission. The two became friends, and Dr. Wells took it as a personal responsibility to make the diary available in English. "Dr. Hachiya's consent," recalls Dr. Wells, now on the surgery staff at the University of North Carolina Medical School, "sprang from the hope that it would have a sobering effect on those who would wage aggressive war in the future." Ten years after A-Day Dr. Hachiya still runs the Hiroshima hospital. "Life," he said the other day, "is a little more pleasant now."

—BERNARD KALB.



—From "Hiroshima Diary."

Dr. Hachiya's hospital—"The stink of hell is there."

in thought and existence; the simplest techniques of biological habit going astray; the retention of old values and the acceptance of new; the primitive emergence of elementary medicine; the search for political reality; the appearance of the hoodlum and the saint; the screaming, shattering horrors of pain and death—all these are details in an epic canvas. This is, after all, the essential meaning of the A-Bomb and Hiroshima.

This book has important technical values. To the physician, the civil-defense worker, the fire departments, the police, this book gives the lie to complacency. Suffice it to say that thousands of lives could have been saved if Hiroshima had been given the time to adjust and prepare for the reality of the bomb. Blast, fire, panic, starvation, malnutrition, exposure, sunstroke, and electrolyte imbalance killed as effectively as primary and secondary radiation. Good, orthodox medical techniques could not cope with the unknown. Population dispersal and resettlement would have saved the stunned thousands who wandered aimlessly to their destruction. Civil defense tests cease to be irritating inconveniences with the memory of this book firmly implanted in the public mind.

Clear, precise, and (ironically enough) exciting narrative reveals the most important phenomenon. Incredible as it may seem, the hell produced an almost utopian living together and sharing together. The community of suffering became the community of loving. There were exceptions. Hoodlumism did break out: there were the usual bureaucratic idiocies; there were the expected venalities. But these were the exceptions. For the most part, this community watched the coming of the dreaded signs of radiation disease and shielded its members from the horrors of despair. In keeping with this spirit, there is not one word or expression of hatred in this book—or in the mouths of the little civilization that lived and perished in the Hiroshima Communications Hospital. In hell, they learned the ultimate power of selflessness, the human weapon that negated the bomb.

This truly remarkable book by Dr. Hachiya has been translated by Warner Wells, M.D., one of the American physicians who came to Hiroshima where, as surgical consultant to the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, he met the author and became inspired with this phenomenon of our time. The quality of his translation is a tribute to himself and to those in Hiroshima who gave him the insight into the deeper meaning of this journal of our time.

Special Light on the Lurid Flash

"A Chronicle of Jeopardy, 1945-1955," by Rexford Guy Tugwell (University of Chicago Press. 489 pp. \$7.50), offers the troubled reflections of a political science professor written on each of the anniversaries following the dropping of the first A-bomb. It is reviewed here by David O. Woodbury, author of "Atoms for Peace" and the forthcoming "Total War or Total Peace."

By David O. Woodbury

MR. Rexford Guy Tugwell is a writer of great experience and power. And in a style sometimes as lurid as the most hysterical journalese, he uses his every skill—as well as the atomic bomb—to alarm us in his present book. Doom looms incessantly in his pages, coming ever closer. By his own word a believer in collectivism, he pictures an America, entangled in her chains of free enterprise, hurtling downward into some atomic hell, dragging a frightened world after her. Tragically, he believes all this implicitly. To him our only remaining hope lies in clawing our way back to the haven of the welfare state before the last blinding atomic flash consumes us.

It is a pity that in the dawn of the use of atomic energy for peace Mr. Tugwell has only an angry look backward into the night to offer us. It is also unfortunate that a writer of such power as Mr. Tugwell should deliberately use his pen and prominence to bend history to the uses of special pleading, and that he should ring in the atomic bomb to do it all. Yet he does almost nothing else in 489 pages of closely-knit diatribe against the numerous enemies of extreme socialism. The "economic royalists," the "malefactors of great wealth," the "interests in scarcity"—all this weary company of New Deal scapegoats have been hauled out of their graves again. There is hardly a paragraph in all this monumental work, covering the interwoven political and nuclear history of the past decade, that is not loaded with cynical abuse of everything America has done since Hiroshima. One looks eagerly for some small plateau of relief but must stumble on without rest.

As I understand the word "Chronicle" in Mr. Tugwell's title, it suggests



—Scott Long, Minneapolis Tribune.

"Which Is Going to Revolve Around Which?"

an objective historic account. But Mr. Tugwell's "Chronicle" is sadly remote from any such thing. He uses the awesome weapon of the atomic bomb irresponsibly to bludgeon his readers into a distrust of the American system. This is no objective inquiry into the science of the atomic bomb. To use the atomic scientists' achievements in the half-light of insufficient understanding, as Mr. Tugwell does, is a false use. To use them in the service of special propaganda is to betray nature and mankind. Yet the author quotes in many places the published misgivings of certain young atomic workers. These have great force and lend authenticity to his plea for panic. But never does he give us the obverse opinion which is held by dozens, even hundreds, of older and more responsible men who see beyond the lurid flash at Hiroshima to the long steady pull of benevolent atomic forces. Never does he mention the already magnificent achievements of the atom in medicine, in agriculture, in industry, in research. The reason: these victories do not lend credibility to Mr. Tugwell's own arguments.

I wish I could see an accurate historical contribution in this voluminous account of an exploratory period that was actually filled with devotion, with hope, and with skilful scientific achievement. For the book is obviously intended as a definitive text for students. But I can see only propaganda and a scientific distortion, both wilfully fashioned to buttress old arguments.