

# Books

## UNFORGETTABLE FIRE: PICTURES DRAWN BY ATOMIC BOMB SURVIVORS

edited by Japan Broadcasting Corporation

(Random House, Pantheon Books, 109 pp.; \$15.95/\$5.95)

Kai Hong

Mr. Kobahashi, a survivor of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, saw a TV drama that reminded him of the explosion. He made a drawing and bicycled with it over to the studios of NHK, the television station. Say the editors, "Just as Mr. Kobahashi was 77 years old, we knew that other survivors of the Atomic Bomb were rapidly aging. Even in Hiroshima the number of people who did not experience the Atomic Bomb had increased to almost half the population." In 1974 the station appealed to the survivors of the bomb: "Let us leave for posterity pictures about the Atomic Bomb drawn by the citizens." Over twelve hundred pictures were sent in to the studio "to make amends individually for the people who died that day and to relieve the anguish or [artists'] souls"; about a hundred from the collection were introduced on TV and exhibited at the Peace Cultural Center in Hiroshima from August 1 to August 6, 1975—the thirtieth anniversary of Hiroshima. *Unforgettable Fire* is a reproduction of those pictures.

The year 1975 marked the winding down of the long, drawn-out, and costly Vietnam conflict. Exhausted and preoccupied with Vietnam, the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of Hiroshima was not one of America's pressing concerns. Hiroshima, in fact, has never been one of the favorite recollections of U.S. involvement in World War II; it has been an uncomfortable issue, tacitly suppressed.

It is appropriate and also a bit ironic that this Japanese commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of Hiroshima should appear in English translation just now as we enter the decade of the '80s, the fortieth anniversary only a few years away. If the decades of conflict, dissension, and political upheaval that seemed to threaten the very survival of Western civilization are behind us, there are as we enter the '80s sinister forces on the horizon that are not being confronted squarely—forces

that work in disgruntled quietude. At this very moment the radio brings the news that Pakistan, India, and South Africa are all planning secret atom bomb tests. There seems to be a proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the Third World, in addition to the immense destructive power already accumulated in the nuclear stockpiles of the U.S., USSR, China, England, and France. Furthermore, every nation with an active nuclear energy policy is a potential member of the nuclear fraternity; this includes most nations on the earth. We have no idea of the hazards that nuclear power plants, sprouting everywhere on the planet, portend. The Three-Mile Island accident helped to dramatize potential hazards of unforeseen magnitude; it is anybody's guess how many unpublicized accidents there have been at nuclear installations, military or civilian, around the world. Even in Japan, the first nation to suffer the atomic bomb, it has recently come to light that accidents at nuclear power plants have been covered up, creating national scandal.

To most Americans, Hiroshima and the threat of nuclear holocaust are distant concepts that only the intellect can grasp; there is little emotional effect. Never having experienced a world war on home soil, Americans find it difficult to imagine themselves as victims. As the character in Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* says, it is somehow impossible for anyone who wasn't there himself to capture the horrors of Hiroshima. Dick Nelson, who was on *Enola Gay*, the plane that dropped the first A-bomb on Hiroshima, said the same thing. "When I saw the picture of the test bomb in New Mexico, it didn't give me any true indication of the size of the explosion. So what I saw at Hiroshima was a surprise. I didn't expect the result to be as devastating as it was; I don't think anybody did. Pictures don't explain the complete story of the A-bomb. You have to see it before you

realize how tremendous it is."

Perhaps it is appropriate to recall the George Orwell of 1984, who looked at the future with dark pessimism and tried to avert the encroachment of totalitarianism. During World War II, Orwell wrote: "England is lacking in what one might call concentration-camp literature. The special world created by secret-police forces, censorship of opinion, torture and frame-up trials, of course, is known about and to some extent disapproved of, but it has made very little emotional impact....To understand such things one has to be able to imagine oneself as the victim." 1984 was meant to enable its readers to imagine themselves as victims.

The situation is parallel regarding the dangers of nuclear holocaust. What is needed is a work of literature or a film that will bring home to the consciousness of average Americans the reality of the nuclear menace. *Unforgettable Fire* goes a long way in that direction. Unlike the mere recitation of statistics, these drawings and pictures, marks of individual suffering, make the bombing of Hiroshima personal and comprehensible. Most of them reflect a passionate urgency to get down as much as possible as forcefully as possible, and in that unpretentious genuineness they make us empathize with the victims.

Still, the power even of this type of picture to evoke the full extent and uniqueness of atomic horror and destruction is strictly limited. As individual sufferings, they may not seem very different from what other war victims have experienced. It is the totality of the Hiroshima experience, the unprecedented sheer devastation, that distinguishes it. A similar magnitude of destruction can be found only in the great natural disasters that our ancestors used to call acts of God. Of Zamyatin's novel *We*, Orwell wrote: "We is in effect a study of the Machine, the genie that man has thoughtlessly let out of its bottle and cannot put back again." Orwell was terrified of the uses to which technology might be put by men determined to enslave society, and so he, too, came to question and satirize the implied aims of industrial civilization. Hiroshima is the symbol of that Machine, the inevitable ultimate product of a misguided industrial civilization.

With 1984 and the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima not far off, *Unforget-*

table *Fire* ought to be a point of departure for reexamining current developments and for doing something to avert a future disaster.

**WELFARE, JUSTICE,  
AND FREEDOM**

by Scott Gordon

(Columbia University Press; 234 pp.; \$15.00)

Ernest H. Schell

In this brief, thoughtful, and discerning book, Scott Gordon dissects the bases of social, political, and economic order in modern democratic societies. Professor of economics as well as a member of the department of history and philosophy of science at Indiana University, the author is clearly at ease on interdisciplinary ground.

*Welfare, Justice, and Freedom* approaches its subject on two levels; together they constitute a coherent analysis of the social philosophy of pluralism. At the first level Gordon indicts all reductionist philosophical and political methodologies that attempt to oversimplify moral choice. Neither absolutism nor Marxism nor natural law can produce the Edenic state each promises. Most dangerous of all, warns Gordon, are the positivists, who believe that there is a scientific way to make an ideal world by the application of sovereign power.

Thus, in this first and more elementary level of analysis, Gordon argues that moral problems have no ultimate solution. The best any society can do is to rely on open and broadly participatory procedures of political accommodation so that major moral decisions involving the polity can be responsive to the needs and wishes of society at large. By assigning decision-making power to elected officials rather than to appointed, or self-appointed, "experts," society gains immeasurably in the degree of freedom it enjoys, even though it may sacrifice something in efficiency. "Power corrupts," Gordon echoes Lord Acton, "and power without responsibility, corrupts absolutely." The author is accordingly alarmed by the tendency in the Congress of the United States to pass enabling legislation for social programs whose executive details are left to bureaucrats invisible to the public eye.

... and *Summer's Lease*

Here and there throughout the year *Worldview's* reviewers suggested you put these books on your mental shelf. With summer vacations in mind, we venture to remind you of them again.

**THE AMERICAN JEREMIAD**, by Sacvan Bercovitch (University of Wisconsin Press; 239 pp.; \$4.95 [paper])

"Bercovitch moves from seventeenth-century Puritan rhetoric to its eighteenth-century adaptations, to the uses of the jeremiad up to the Civil War and to its influence upon Melville, Hawthorne, and other nineteenth-century writers....One of the most illuminating studies of American culture...."

— James Finn

**APOCALYPSE: NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE IN WORLD POLITICS**, by Louis René Beres (University of Chicago Press; xvi + 315 pp.; \$20.00)

"Its scope and detail, and the readiness of the author to propose solutions to problems that often appear insoluble, make it worth attention by those who are interested in attempting to overcome the dilemmas of the age of nuclear weapons."— James T. Johnson

**BERTOLT BRECHT IN AMERICA**, by James K. Lyon (Princeton University Press; 393 pp.; \$19.75)

"A must-read book for any serious student of the theatre. This is neither your typical show-biz hagiography nor a psychological evisceration of a tormented artist....Lyon's book clarifies a popular misunderstanding of Brecht as a king of Marxist propaganda. The man was clearly an intellectual at root, passionately at war with culturally conditioned assumptions about what can or should happen on stage."— Anthony Scully

**CHINA: ITS HISTORY AND CULTURE**, by W. Scott Morton (Lippincott & Crowell; 276 pp.; \$16.95)

In the midst of the current onslaught of books about China, Morton, with an economy of words, is able to place recent events into a lucid progression within the sweep of Chinese history.— Robert J. Myers

**THE CLIMATE MANDATE**, by Walter Orr Roberts and Henry Lansford (W.H. Freeman; 197 pp.; \$14.95/\$7.95)

"Two consecutive years of bad weather in any major grain-exporting country would bring famine to dozens of nations, disrupting a fragile world economy already weakened by expensive energy and rampant inflation." This book is a "valuable tool for understanding a complex problem and, more important, for augmenting our ability to cope with it."— Albert L. Huebner

**CRITICISM IN THE WILDERNESS**, by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Yale University Press; xi + 323 pp.; \$18.00)

"Touching, in fact, on every important critic in German, French, and English of the last hundred and fifty years— Hartman restlessly and incessantly ponders the place of literary criticism in modern intellectual life or, more precisely, its place in academic life and its relation to the other academic functions of teaching and scholarship...."— Richard Rand

**CRY OF THE PEOPLE**, by Penny Lernoux (Doubleday & Co.; 535 pp.; \$12.95)

"This powerful volume concludes that the best thing U.S. Christians can do for the people of Latin America is not to send more missionaries, investment, or foreign aid, but to reexamine and reverse those policies which give aid and comfort to the oppressors of the people."— Richard Armstrong

**DECLINE OF AN EMPIRE** by Hélène Garrère d'Encausse (Newsweek Books; 304 pp.; \$10.95)

"A major contribution to our knowledge of the Soviet Union and to our understanding of nationalism and ethnicity at a time when many small nations are pressing claims against their rulers....A wealth of information that was unearthed, one assumes, with great difficulty, given official Soviet attitudes."

— Myrna Chase