



Memorial to the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. (Photo: Samueles, Pixabay.com, CC-0)

ATOMIC BOMBINGS AT 75: Hiroshima Cover-up

How Timesman Won a Pulitzer While on War Dept. Payroll

Autor: Amy Goodman

is the host of „Democracy Now!,” a daily international TV/radio news hour airing on 1,100 stations in North America. She was awarded the 2008 Right Livelihood Award, dubbed the “Alternative Nobel” prize, and received the award in the Swedish Parliament in December.



Autor: David Goodman

a contributing writer for Mother Jones, is the co-author with his sister Amy Goodman of „The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them.”



The NYT reversed itself to the official narrative of categorically dismissing reports of deadly effects of radiation in articles by a Times correspondent who was being paid by the government, report Amy and David Goodman.

At the dawn of the nuclear age, an independent Australian journalist named Wilfred Burchett traveled to Japan to cover the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The only problem was that General Douglas MacArthur had declared southern Japan off-limits, barring the press. Over 200,000 people died in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but no Western journalist witnessed the aftermath and told the story. The world’s media obediently crowded onto the USS Missouri off the coast of Japan to cover the surrender of the Japanese.

Wilfred Burchett decided to strike out on his own. He was determined to see

for himself what this nuclear bomb had done, to understand what this vaunted new weapon was all about. So he boarded a train and traveled for thirty hours to the city of Hiroshima in defiance of Gen. MacArthur’s orders.

Burchett emerged from the train into a nightmare world. The devastation that confronted him was unlike any he had ever seen during the war. The city of Hiroshima, with a population of 350,000, had been razed. Multistory buildings were reduced to charred posts. He saw people’s shadows seared into walls and sidewalks. He met people with their skin melting off. In the hospital, he saw patients with purple skin hemorrhages, gangrene, fever, and rapid hair loss. Burchett was among the first to witness and describe radiation sickness.

Burchett sat down on a chunk of rubble with his Baby Hermes typewriter. His dispatch began:



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The article „The Atomic Plague“ by Wilfred Burchett in Daily Express from 5.9.1945.

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“In Hiroshima, thirty days after the first atomic bomb destroyed the city and shook the world, people are still dying, mysteriously and horribly—people who were uninjured in the cataclysm from an unknown something which I can only describe as the atomic plague.”

He continued, tapping out the words that still haunt to this day:

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

Burchett’s article, headlined THE ATOMIC PLAGUE, was published on Sept. 5, 1945, in the London Daily Express. The story caused a worldwide sensation. Burchett’s candid reaction to the horror shocked readers.

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

When you arrive in Hiroshima you can look around for twenty-five and perhaps thirty square miles. You can see hardly a building. It gives you an empty feeling in the stomach to see such man-made destruction.”

Burchett’s searing independent reportage was a public relations fiasco for the U.S. military. General Douglas MacArthur had gone to pains to restrict journalists’ access to the bombed cities, and his military censors were sanitizing and even killing dispatches that described the horror. The official narrative of the atomic bombings downplayed civilian casualties and categorically dismissed reports of the deadly lingering effects of radiation.



Wilfred Burchett (YouTube). Source: consortiumnews.com, License: CC BY-SA 4.0

Reporters whose dispatches conflicted with this version of events found themselves silenced: George Weller of the Chicago Daily News slipped into Nagasaki and wrote a 25,000-word story on the nightmare that he found there. Then he made a crucial error: He submitted the

piece to military censors. His newspaper never even received his story. As Weller later summarized his experience with MacArthur’s censors, “They won.”

Kill the Messenger

U.S. authorities responded in time-honored fashion to Burchett’s revelations: They attacked the messenger. Gen. MacArthur ordered him expelled from Japan (the order was later rescinded), and his camera with photos of Hiroshima mysteriously vanished while he was in the hospital. U.S. officials accused Burchett of being influenced by Japanese propaganda. They scoffed at the notion of an atomic sickness. The U.S. military issued a press release right after the Hiroshima bombing that downplayed human casualties, instead emphasizing that the bombed area was the site of valuable industrial and military targets.

Four days after Burchett’s story splashed across front pages around the world, U.S. Major General Leslie R. Groves, director of the atomic bomb project, invited a select group of thirty reporters to New Mexico. Foremost among this group was William L. Laurence, the Pulitzer Prize-winning science reporter for The New York Times. Groves took the reporters to the site of the first atomic test. His intent was to demonstrate that no atomic radiation lingered at the site. Groves trusted Laurence to convey the military’s line; the general was not disappointed.

Laurence’s front-page story, “U.S. ATOM BOMB SITE BELIES TOKYO TALES: TESTS ON NEW MEXICO RANGE CONFIRM THAT BLAST, AND NOT RADIATION, TOOK TOLL,” ran on Sept. 12, 1945, following a three-day delay to clear military censors.

“This historic ground in New Mexico, scene of the first atomic explosion on earth and cradle of a new era in civilization, gave the most effective answer today to Japanese propaganda that radiations [sic] were responsible for deaths even after the day of the explosion, Aug. 6, and that persons entering Hiroshima

had contracted mysterious maladies due to persistent radioactivity," the article began. Laurence said unapologetically that the Army tour was intended "to give the lie to these claims."

Laurence quoted Gen. Groves: "The Japanese claim that people died from radiation. If this is true, the number was very small."

Laurence then went on to offer his own remarkable editorial on what happened:

"The Japanese are still continuing their propaganda aimed at creating the impression that we won the war unfairly, and thus attempting to create sympathy for themselves and milder terms . . . Thus, at the beginning, the Japanese described 'symptoms' that did not ring true."

But Laurence knew better. He had observed the first atomic bomb test on July 16, 1945, and he withheld what he knew about radioactive fallout across the southwestern desert that poisoned local residents and livestock. He kept mum about the spiking Geiger counters all around the test site.

William L. Laurence went on to write a series of ten articles for the Times that served as a glowing tribute to the ingenuity and technical achievements of the nuclear program. Throughout these and other reports, he downplayed and denied the human impact of the bombing. Laurence won the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting.

On Government Payroll

It turns out that William L. Laurence was not only receiving a salary from The New York Times. He was also on the payroll of the War Department. In March 1945, Gen. Leslie Groves had held a secret meeting at The New York Times with Laurence to offer him a job writing press releases for the Manhattan Project, the U.S. program to develop atomic weapons. The intent, according to the Times, was "to explain the intricacies of the atomic bomb's operating principles in laymen's language." Lau-



General Leslie Groves (left), military head of the Manhattan Project, with Professor Robert Oppenheimer (right). (U.S. Army). Source: consortiumnews.com, License: CC BY-SA 4.0

rence also helped write statements on the bomb for President Truman and Secretary of War Henry Stimson.

Laurence eagerly accepted the offer, "his scientific curiosity and patriotic zeal perhaps blinding him to the notion that he was at the same time compromising his journalistic independence," as essayist Harold Evans wrote in a history of war reporting. Evans recounted:

"After the bombing, the brilliant but bullying Groves continually suppressed or distorted the effects of radiation. He dismissed reports of Japanese deaths as 'hoax or propaganda.' The Times' Laurence weighed in, too, after Burchett's reports, and parroted the government line."

Indeed, numerous press releases issued by the military after the Hiroshima bombing—which in the absence of eyewitness accounts were often reproduced verbatim by U.S. newspapers—were written by none other than Laurence.

"Mine has been the honor, unique in the history of journalism, of preparing the War Department's official press release for worldwide distribution," boasted Laurence in his memoirs, *Dawn Over Zero*. "No greater honor could have

come to any newspaperman, or anyone else for that matter."

"Atomic Bill" Laurence revered atomic weapons. He had been crusading for an American nuclear program in articles as far back as 1929. His dual status as government agent and reporter earned him an unprecedented level of access to American military officials—he even flew in the squadron of planes that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki. His reports on the atomic bomb and its use had a hagiographic tone, laced with descriptions that conveyed almost religious awe.

In Laurence's article about the bombing of Nagasaki (it was withheld by military censors until a month after the bombing), he described the detonation over Nagasaki that incinerated 100,000 people. Laurence waxed:

"Awe-struck, we watched it shoot upward like a meteor coming from the earth instead of from outer space, becoming ever more alive as it climbed skyward through the white clouds. . . . It was a living thing, a new species of being, born right before our incredulous eyes."

Laurence later recounted his impressions of the atomic bomb:

"Being close to it and watching it as it was being fashioned into a living thing,

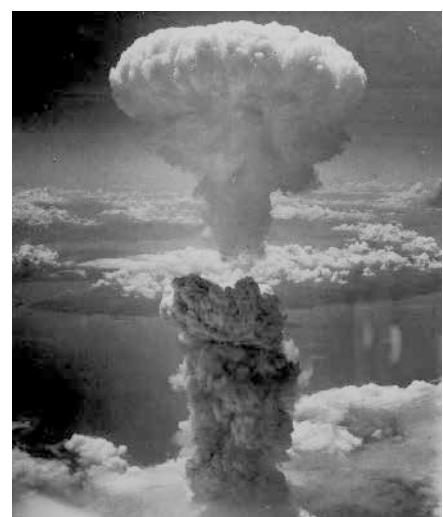


Photo of Nagasaki bombing taken by Charles Levy from one of the B-29 Superfortresses used in the attack. (Office of War Information.). Source: consortiumnews.com, License: CC BY-SA 4.0

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION

Occasional rain this afternoon
and tonight. Rain tomorrow.
Temperature Yesterday-Mon., 77; Min., 63;
Interior Index, 62.8; N. H. 61.2; Boston, 71; P. W.

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NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1945.

Congress Returns Today to Take Up Problems of Peace

Leaders Expect Light Attendance Since Major Bills Are Not Ready for Floor Action

Truman, Chiefs to Confer

His Message, Described as "Quite Comprehensive," May Be Held Up Till Next Week

By C. P. TRUSSELL
Editor to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4.—Constitutive session of Congress, nearly five weeks before the emergency session ends on its current recess, and it will not be adjourned again until the fall session for at least a day, it is due for an early orientation, though a Presidential message, from the war work it left to the peace-time, will be delivered on Sept. 21.

The message, described in its tentative form at the White House as "quite comprehensive," may be sent or taken to the Capitol by President Truman on Thursday or Friday, or it may be held up until next week, depending, it is estimated, on how soon and in what volume members of Congress answer the formal recall summonses.

Some leaders predicted that in the light of the leadership of earlier returning committees to have the next adjournment ready for the fall session, which would be held on Oct. 10, and others expected to come this week.

Truman, Leaders Will Confer

The President will confer with Congressional leaders tomorrow before the Senate and House reconvene. At this meeting it is expected that he will go over his program with them, and the two programs he intends to recommend

Army Gives Plan to Keep 665,000 From Going Abroad

Exempted From Occupation Are Men of 37, Those of 34 to 36 With Year's Service, Those With 45 Points Up on May 12

By WILLIAM S. WHITE
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4.—In these changes, a spokesman for second liberations of areas held by the War Department brought out yesterday that during these days the War Department announced to that the force of the Twenty-third night news regulations among the United States had actions over prospective states that they need have no more deployment to occupied territories, which would be achieved and evenness and an eight-point system.

This was made possible, it was found from foreign assignments, stated, because the occupation of Japan is moving smoothly on schedule, and the Twenty-third and Twenty-seventh Divisions, in particular, which had to be taken into account in advance has arisen.

Consideration with the Army's new news demands, however, indicated that better pay increases will be similarly affected.

No enlisted man will be sent overseas but will be retained in the Continental United States if he falls into any one of the following categories:

He is 24, 25 or 36 years old, or has had more than one year of honorable service.

He is 26 years old, or has been serving overseas but will be retained under the computation of May 12.

Continued on Page 15, Column 2

BELDOCK ACCUSES UNRRA FORECASTS ODWYER APPOINTEE \$1,800,000,000 FUND

By Ex-Chief Clerk Accepted Contribution of \$1,350,000, 000 Expected to Be Asked by Truman Soon

District Attorney George J. Bellock, of Monroe County, charged James J. Morris, who was then clerk under District Attorney

Washington, D. C., was then clerk under District Attorney

DAVIS WILL PERMIT LARGE WAGE RISES, HOLD PRICE LEVELS

Stabilization Chief Says Other Output Factors Can Absorb the Added Costs

TO AID LIVING STANDARDS

Gain of 50 Per Cent in Five Years Hold Outas Goal for Federal Economic Policy

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4.—William M. Davis, director of the Office of Price Administration, said today that he would soon issue new news regulations intended to permit substantial wage increases without general price inflation.

The regulation, he added, would be based on his conviction that better wages in not result in direct price increases because other factors must be absorbed by other economic factors.

He declared that the general level of prices must be maintained in the nation to pay off its \$125,000,000,000 public debt at the same level at which it was incurred.

At a news conference he stated also that the Government's post-war economic policy should reflect living standards at per cent with the greatest chapter in the cost of living in the next five years.

Neither inflation nor deflation had appeared since the end of the Japanese war, he said, but a watch must be kept on trends.

ANNUAL INFLATION RATE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4.—The American flag flew over Wake Island this afternoon and one of the greatest chapters in the history of the Pacific war came to an end.

Within a few hours after the Japanese rear admiral had boarded the destroyer escort Levy to surrender command of Wake and approximately 1,200 men of the U.S. force of American seamen and marines went ashore with a flag.

They were ready to raise the symbol of our recognition of the island.

Robert L. Shadley, who had attained his signature to the surrender document while Brig.

Gen. Lawson E. Anderson of Brig.

Wade, commanding

the 1,000-strong Marine Wing, signed

the flag降下

the American flag.

P. M. WITH A MARINE GUARD

and about seventy-five officers and men from the Levy and destroyer

squadron without concern for the

employer's ability to pay.

Continued on Page 15, Column 2

U. S. TROOPS OCCUPY TOKYO SATURDAY; CAPTIVES TO TAKE OVER PRISON CAMPS; AMERICAN FLAG IS RAISED ON WAKE ISLE

Visit to Hiroshima Proves It World's Most-Damaged City

Four Square Miles Leveled by the Atomic Bomb—People Reported Dying at Rate of 100 a Day—Hate for Us Shown

By W. H. LAWRENCE

Editor to The New York Times

HIROSHIMA, Japan, Sept. 3.—Japan announced that the atomic bomb had leveled at a rate of 100,000 in the figure in flattened, rubble-strewn ported Aug. 29 and last Saturday, Hiroshima, where the secret and it was predicted the final weapon harnessing the power of the atom would explode when the agent was used as a decoy when Japanese official detailed statistics are available, the causality was 22,000 dead, 35,000 missing, 13,300 seriously wounded and 10,000 slightly wounded "and many more."

This was the latest news for the front page when Japanese official detailed

statistics were available, the causality was 22,000 dead, 35,000 missing, 13,300 seriously wounded and 10,000 slightly wounded "and many more."

This accounted for approximately

one-half of Hiroshima's pre-

war population of 423,000, but

it was also added that it was

estimated that some 50,000

survived minor wounds that were not

considered serious enough for medical treatment in view of the great

shortage of doctors to deal with

the houses and buildings in the

center of the city irreparably

damaged.

Continued on Page 4, Column 1

Byrnes Says U. S. Agrees To Soviet's Pacific Gains

1ST CAVALRY IN VAN

Veterans Will Lead Way Into Capital—General Sees 400,000 Needed

PRISONERS TO RUN CAMPS

MacArthur Demands Labor, Ships and Communications to Ease Occupation Task

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO, Sept. 3.—Japan, Wednesday, Sept. 3.—The United States First Cavalry Division occupied Tokyo Saturday.

Gen. MacArthur's headquarters announced today.

Gen. MacArthur's headquarters

in Manila will move to the Philippines, and the front page of the Philippines, are now stationed between

Yokohama and Tokyo.

It is believed that General Mac-

Arthur will move his headquarters to Yokohama this same time, but

there have been no announcements

for the formal triumphal entry.

The announcement was made after General MacArthur had issued a statement calling for the swift demobilization of Japan's war machine and taking over vast facilities for the occupation forces.

General MacArthur directed the general staff of the Japanese

First Cavalry Division, which

was to be followed by the

Second Cavalry Division,

and the Third Cavalry Division,

and the Fourth Cavalry Division,

and the Fifth Cavalry Division,

and the Sixth Cavalry Division,

and the Seventh Cavalry Division,

and the Eighth Cavalry Division,

and the Ninth Cavalry Division,

and the Tenth Cavalry Division,

and the Eleventh Cavalry Division,

and the Twelfth Cavalry Division,

and the Thirteenth Cavalry Division,

and the Fourteenth Cavalry Division,

and the Fifteenth Cavalry Division,

and the Sixteenth Cavalry Division,

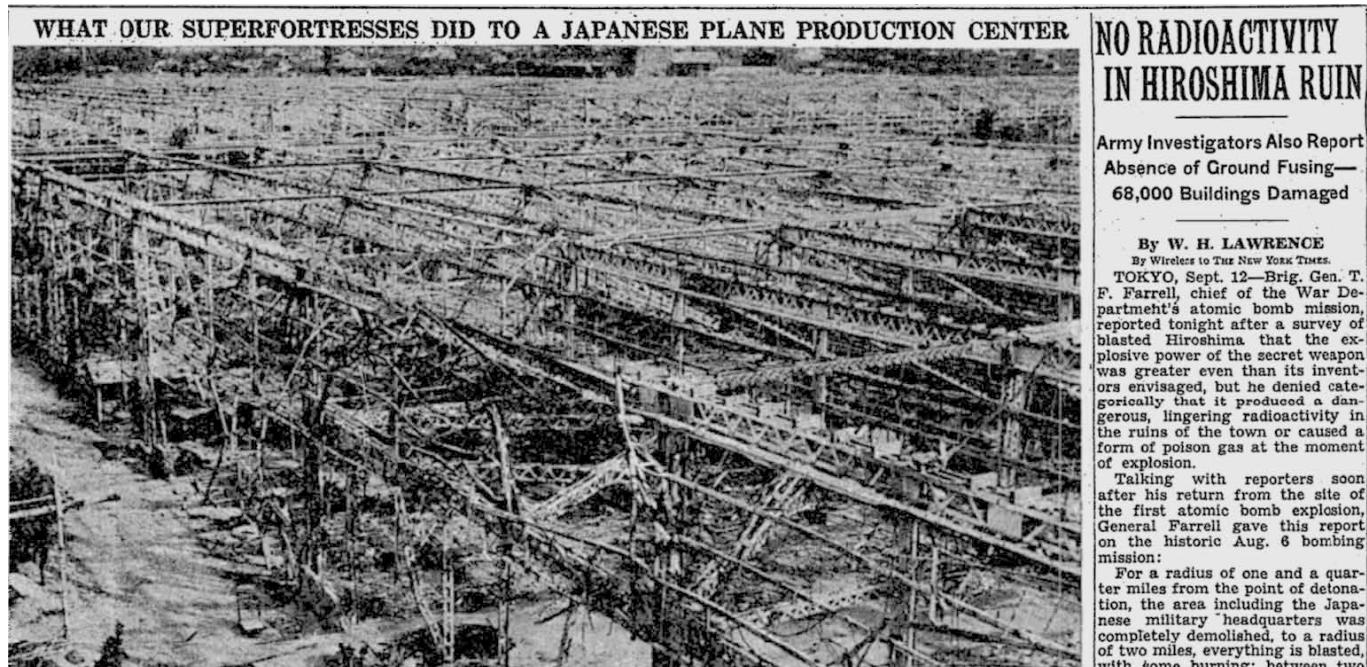
and the Seventeenth Cavalry Division,

and the Eighteenth Cavalry Division,

and the Nineteenth Cavalry Division,

and the Twentieth Cavalry Division,

and the



Lawrence' second piece, contradicting his first on radiation. Source: consortiumnews.com, License: CC BY-SA 4.0

gering radioactivity.” Lawrence’s dispatch quotes only Farrell; the reporter never mentions his eyewitness account of people dying from radiation sickness that he wrote the previous week.

The conflicting accounts of Wilfred Burchett and William L. Laurence might be ancient history were it not for a modern twist. On Oct. 23, 2003, The New York Times published an article about a controversy over a Pulitzer Prize awarded in 1932 to Times reporter Walter Duranty. A former correspondent in the Soviet Union, Duranty had denied the existence of a famine that had killed millions of Ukrainians in 1932 and 1933.

The Pulitzer Board had launched two inquiries to consider stripping Duranty of his prize. The Times “regretted the lapses” of its reporter and had published a signed editorial saying that Duranty’s work was “some of the worst reporting to appear in this newspaper.” Current Times executive editor Bill Keller decried Duranty’s “credulous, uncritical parroting of propaganda.”

On Nov. 21, 2003, the Pulitzer Board decided against rescinding Duranty’s award, concluding that there was “no clear and convincing evidence of deliberate deception” in the articles that won the prize.

NO RADIOACTIVITY IN HIROSHIMA RUIN

Army Investigators Also Report Absence of Ground Fusing—
68,000 Buildings Damaged

By W. H. LAWRENCE

By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES
TOKYO, Sept. 12.—Brig. Gen. T. F. Farrell, chief of the War Department's atomic bomb mission, reported tonight after a survey of blasted Hiroshima that the explosive power of the secret weapon was greater even than its inventors envisaged, but he denied categorically that it produced a dangerous, lingering radioactivity in the ruins of the town or caused a form of poison gas at the moment of explosion.

Talking with reporters soon after his return from the site of the first atomic bomb explosion, General Farrell gave this report on the historic Aug. 6 bombing mission:

For a radius of one and a quarter miles from the point of detonation, the area including the Japanese military headquarters was completely demolished, to a radius of two miles, everything is blasted, with some burning: between two

As an apologist for Joseph Stalin, Duranty is easy pickings. What about the “deliberate deception” of William L. Laurence in denying the lethal effects of radioactivity? And what of the fact that the Pulitzer Board knowingly awarded the top journalism prize to the Pentagon’s paid publicist, who denied the suffering of millions of Japanese? Do the Pulitzer Board and the Times approve of “uncritical parroting of propaganda”—as long as it is from the United States?

It is long overdue that the prize for Hiroshima’s apologist be stripped.