

NEW BOOKS

FROM SOONERS
AND THE O.U. PRESS

Reviewer—Dick Smith

The Social Impact of Bomb Destruction, by Fred Charles Iklé, University of Oklahoma Press

O. U. Press' honor-copping design department is headed by Chicago Academy of Fine Arts graduate Dick Palmer and is completed by O. U. School of Art graduate John Brinkley ('56bfa).

Word has just reached Norman that these two young men have again brought prestige to the Press. In a competition among all Southern publishers for best designed books, three of the fourteen winners were Palmer-Brinkley books (*New Mexico's Royal Road*, *The Aztecs*, *The Blackfeet*). And in a nation-wide competition for book jackets, two jackets, one by Palmer and the other by Brinkley, were selected as winners along with twenty-three others (incidentally, only one other University Press was represented among the twenty-three).

It is, I'm sure, no news to the University Press that Brinkley and Palmer are a good deal—particularly in these days. Any devotee of pocket book stands can vouch for the sales pull of jacket designs.

Still, as regards a new book from the Press called *The Social Impact of Bomb Destruction*, I'd like to stray from the text and call even more attention to the Press' design department.

Other than for its artistic merits, the jacket on this absorbing book is outstanding because it represents the text to perfection. Both artist (Brinkley) and author (Fred Charles Iklé, staff member of the Social Science Division of the Rand Corporation) know the answer when the question arises, How do you best present a sensational topic?—in this instance, society's reaction to bombings.

Suppose you, as a jacket designer, had to answer this question. Judging from most book jackets, more than likely you would draw exploding shapes in violent shades of yellow and red. Artist Brinkley, however, has chosen shapes that are not so much exploding as lying around like timbers in a destroyed home, and the only colors used are different shades of grey.



A home's destruction in Berlin. Picture from University Press' *Impact of Bomb Destruction*.

This is exactly author Iklé's approach. Wreckage statistics and community reactions, drained of screams and sirens, lie by the stack throughout this book, and the only color in Iklé's style is something you might call scientific gray.

Ordinarily scientific gray leaves me cold. But employed in the right place it's as startling as a neon sign. *The Social Impact of Bomb Destruction* is the right place.

The book reminds me of lectures I used to hear my first months in the Army. Neat, sober chaps would come to the lectern with an array of dull charts and olive drab toys; and then suddenly, despite their slightly bored air, I realized that I might very well be one of the statistics on their charts and that I might possibly be ducking in and out of the hatch of a 48-ton toy of my own some day. My yawn would go gulp down my throat and the slightly bored lecturers seemed to be speaking flame and shells, not words.

Author Iklé knows the value of keeping his head amid all the destruction and he is also aware that his reader will be thinking. This could happen to me.

. . . knock on wood . . .

His last chapters make about as much logical hay as possible while the sun's still shining and the fallout hasn't fallen yet. Mr. Iklé takes conditioned issue with strategists who contend that the next major war will begin abruptly and end almost the next day—with half a world wiped out. In addition to a Pearl Harbor beginning, Iklé sees just as probable atomic holocausts starting from brush fire wars getting out of hand or merely from accidental explosions.

He sees opponents' major cities and fallout areas as uninhabitable either through the initial destruction or through threat of

future destruction (providing, of course, the country initially attacked can retaliate); but he doubts that a "broken-backed" war will conclude rapidly.

The idea that bombings alone can destroy a nation's morale is a tragically false notion, as both sides learned in World War II. Iklé makes the singular claim that men will be able to adapt to even more staggering destruction in future wars.

He cites the anxiety of Japanese, wounded at Hiroshima, over whether the new weapon would decide the war. Once, Iklé records, in a hospital ward in which Japanese atomic bomb victims were being treated, a false rumor spread that Japan had the new bomb and had dropped it on the United States' west coast. That hospital ward, which formerly had been the picture of despair and gloom, immediately brightened.

Citing the lengthy process of modern peace negotiations, the future destruction of most communications, and the probable destruction of legislative and administrative bodies, Iklé sees comparatively isolated and bitter groups who will have difficulty reconnoitering their own situation much less that of the enemy: nations much like chickens flopping about with their heads cut off, occasionally striking each other, and finally dying from lack of blood—or lack of citizens, as the case may be.

He agrees that half a world could be wiped out—the northern half, probably—but doubts that the basic difference (Communism vs. Capitalism) will be solved in that the seeds of the difference have been sown in South America, Africa, and Australia—the possible centers of future civilizations.

RECOMMENDED: A shocking picture in a gray frame.