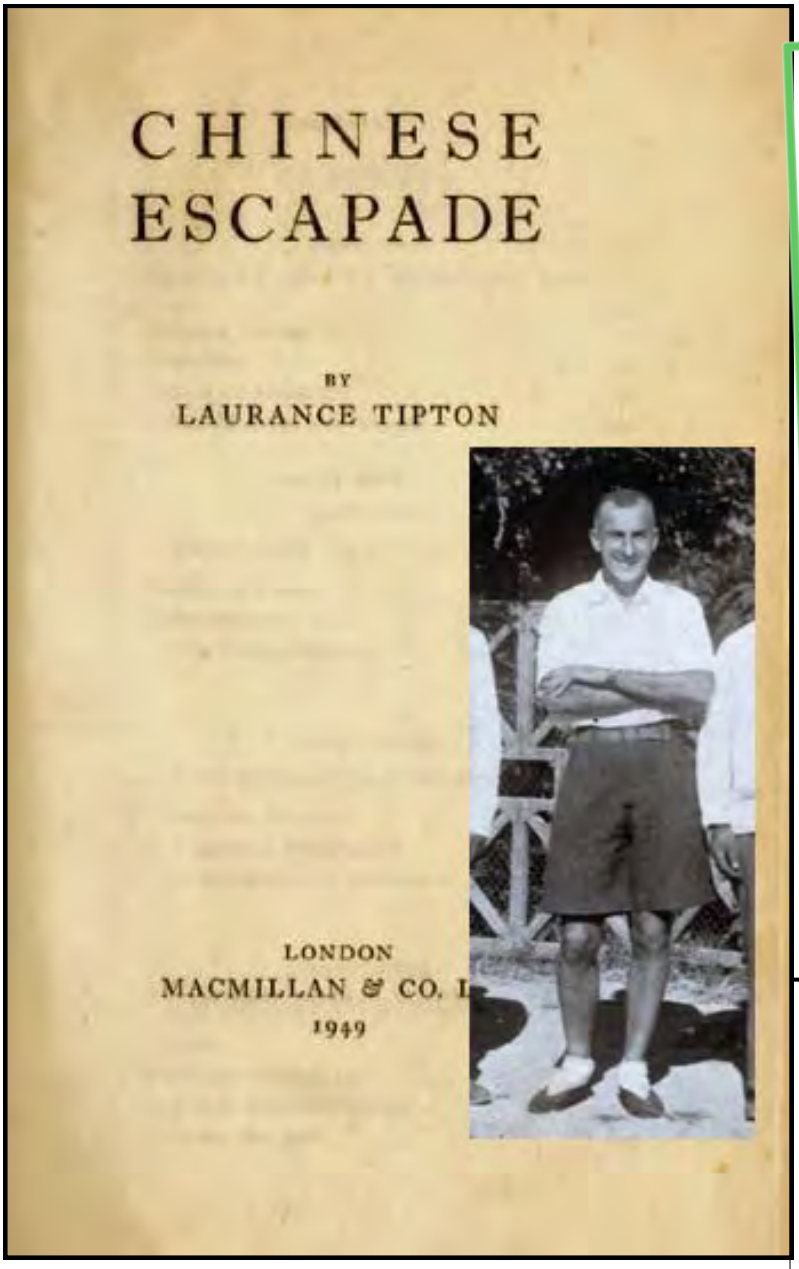

CHINESE ESCAPADE
by
LauranceTipton
1949
London,
MACMILLAN & Co.Ltd.

CHINESE ESCAPADE

By LAURANCE TIPTON

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1949.

Part ONE

January 1940 to February 1942

CHAPTER I

JAPANESE INQUISITION

JANUARY 1940: A bitterly cold north-east wind from the bleak Mongolian Plateau swept down the Nankow Pass, scouring the gullies of dead leaves, twigs and sand and hurling them against the windows of the compartment. The sun, a dull red disc in the dust-laden atmosphere, had already slipped below the horizon; in half an hour it would be dark. Slowly, and with much laborious effort, the train was pushed up the steep incline, through tunnels and around hairpin bends, over viaducts, from one side to the other of the pass that led from the plains of Peking to the vast expanses of Mongolia. With the exception of the recumbent figure in the opposite corner seat, the carriage was empty. Dinner, consisting of fried rice and an assortment of vegetables, had already been served in the dining-car. Cold as it was, I stretched out on the seat and prepared to sleep.

"Passport — baggage examination!" shouted the Japanese frontier guard, noisily opening the compartment door. We had crossed the border into Mongolia. Getting no response from myself or the bundle of fur in the opposite corner, the guard became considerably more fluent. This had the desired result and my companion emerged from his slumbers for sufficient length of time to point out that he was Japanese. After profuse apologies and no little bowing and sucking of breath, the guard and his attendant gendarme turned their attention to me and examined my passport. In their haste to depart they overlooked the examination of my baggage and were bowing their way backwards through the compartment door when my Japanese travelling companion bestirred himself sufficiently to point out that they had overlooked this integral part of their duty.

Taking down my suitcase from the rack, I opened it for them. They made a hurried examination and were half-way out of the compartment again when the bundle in the corner indicated that I had another suitcase under the seat. Apart from treading heavily on his toes as I replaced the baggage on the rack, there was little that I could do and the remaining three hours were spent in a distinct atmosphere of hostility.

Just before midnight the train pulled into the station at Kalgan, capital of the State of Mengchiang and seat of the newly organised Federal Autonomous Government of Mongolia, which functioned under Japanese tutelage. Descending from the train I was surrounded by Chinese friends from our office who had come to meet me. They were clad in heavy fur-lined coats and hats and wore high Mongolian boots of thick felt. After the exchange of greetings, my friends led me to the passport examination office and discreetly disappeared, promising to await me at the station exit. At a desk in the office sat a Military Police Lieutenant and a young sandy-haired Russian, who introduced himself as Nikoli. Checking my travelling pass and passport, he told me to report to the Japanese Military Police, the Consular Police and the Japanese Consul-General on the following morning and to apply for a residential permit from the Foreign Affairs Department of the Municipal Government. After delivering a neat little speech on the freedom of travel in Mengchiang, with a rider to the effect that, if I ever considered it necessary to travel, I was to be sure and seek his advice and assistance in obtaining a travelling pass, he bade me a somewhat alcoholic farewell and implied that he would be seeing a lot of me in the future.

It did not take me long to realise that this was not the Mongolia I had known some five years earlier. Although this area had never shown a favourable balance of trade, there had been always the outward appearance of prosperity and trade common to most frontier towns: the streets blocked by strings of camels laden with wool and furs from the Mongolian wastes and attended by strapping, greasy sons of the Mongolian plateau; groups of Mongolian merchants in their colourful red, purple and magenta robes, and high felt boots, strolling through the main streets followed, at a respectful distance, by their womenfolk. The latter were usually clad in long gowns of all shades of red; their hair, ears, neck and wrists heavily adorned with ornaments of silver inlaid with coral, lapis and cornelian; around the waist a girdle of embossed silver, inlaid with coral and trimmed with red silk tassels. Sometimes this picturesque attire would be crowned with a brand-new felt hat straight from the store hat-box, with undented crown, placed on the head with the precision only to be achieved by the novice. Lama priests, rosary in hand, mingled with the crowd, and over all fell a constant rain of dust from the traffic on the dirt roads.

Japanese soldiers now strolled in the streets; camel caravans were no longer allowed within the town, and only a few were to be seen at the inns on the outskirts,

while noisy delivery trucks hooted their way up and down the main road. Occasionally a small group of Mongols were to be seen, but seldom nowadays were they accompanied by their women-folk. Now and again a Packard or Buick would pass in a cloud of dust, and with difficulty one could see the heads of the occupants, little men lost in the depths of American super-upholstery: the Japanese rulers of Mongolia.

The town had been replanned. Hundreds of cheap, square concrete buildings had appeared, new shoddily constructed roads had been built, and government offices were already showing signs of wear. Broken windows were covered with paper, tin stove-pipes projected through windows from stoves that had replaced the already defunct steam-heating systems. Inside these offices each department was crowded with be-spectacled Japanese clerks, their friends who had dropped in to pass the time of day, and very plain stumpy-legged office girls who were kept on a continual round refilling the inevitable glasses of tea.

I spent the following year in an unequal struggle with the so-called "Autonomous " government to maintain our business in this newly-formed State. For more than thirty years we had done a thriving business consigning cigarettes to North-West China, Kansu and Sinkiang by camel caravan, but with the retreat of the Chinese troops westwards to the borders of Ninghsia, this flourishing trade had been cut and our distribution was confined within the boundaries of Mengchiang. Bankrupt as this area was, owing to the closing of trade routes to the North-West, to Sinkiang and to Urga, and the consequent lack of exports, imports were restricted to essentials such as building materials and machinery, with which the Japanese planned to make the area self-supporting by the expansion of tanneries, woollen mills and agricultural implements for the development of grain production. Ex-change permits were handled by the government and import permits were almost impossible to obtain.

The government, torn between their desire to exclude this capitalistic "tobacco trusto", and their revenue from the enormous taxes levied on our goods, took a middle course and restricted our imports to one hundred million cigarettes a month. Import permits were granted, together with exchange remittance permits, but, more often than not, they failed to give us exchange facilities, which resulted in the accumulation of millions of useless Mengchiang dollars.

In the meantime the government had started to build their own cigarette factory. Acres of land were bought from farmers by forced sales at prices well below current land values and the cultivation of tobacco was started. Early in '41 the government-sponsored factory was opened, our quota was immediately cut by half and import permits became even more difficult to obtain. The government approached us to sell our property; we refused. The Japanese military authorities then called and informed us that our premises, being adjacent to the railway, were in a strategic area and therefore were required for military purposes and we must sell. Again we refused, but added that if the military would build us identically similar premises on a desirable site, we might consider the matter. Our imports dwindled practically to nothing and we were eventually refused import permits altogether. By this time I had managed to reduce our funds through devious channels and, giving up the possibilities of further business in Mengchiang, I returned to Tientsin, leaving a junior member of the staff in charge.

Not feeling sufficiently sure of themselves to occupy our property by force, but determined to wipe us off the slate legally, Japanese Army officials started an enquiry into my black-market activities. Their first step was to have the wife of one of our Chinese advisers, whom they called to Kalgan by a fictitious message reporting that her husband was seriously ill, kidnapped by the Military Police. Following this, they confiscated all our office records and a message was sent to me in Tientsin, requesting that I visit Kalgan for a few days to attend to matters of "importance" relating to the Company's business. This I ignored. However, M— whom I had left in Kalgan, developed a serious case of dysentery necessitating treatment, but he was refused permission to leave for Peking. I caught the next train for Peking, and as M— was an American citizen, called at the American Embassy, where an urgent phone call was put through to the Japanese Consulate in Kalgan, demanding that M— be allowed to return to Peking at once. Two days passed but he did not appear, and finally, having discussed the situation with the British Consul, who, as usual, was entirely non-committal, I decided the only thing to do was to go up to Kalgan myself.

On arrival everything appeared outwardly normal and the following morning I called at the Japanese Consulate and requested that they obtain a pass for M— who, although by now somewhat better, was still in need of treatment. Apart from his health, it was quite obviously no place for an American to be stationed under the existing conditions. The Consul was apologetic, blaming the Military Police for the refusal to issue a travelling pass. I next called on Nikoli, who issued a pass for M— immediately, and he left the same night for Peking.

The next morning Nikoli called and advised me that the Military Police wished to interrogate me on matters pertaining to our business. Refusing to go, I pointed out that I would not leave the house, unless by force, until they had released the wife of our Chinese adviser. Were the Military Police suitably equipped to deal with maternity cases? Could they not see she was in an advanced state of pregnancy? (She was an extremely fat woman and consequently the deception was not

discovered.) Surely I must be mistaken he had never heard of her. Nevertheless, within two hours she was released with apologies — merely a case of mistaken identity.

Meanwhile I had telegraphed to Tientsin for our Japanese adviser, Mizuno-san. A very likeable man, he was educated in America, had travelled in Europe and was married to a German wife. As a hobby he bred champion Alsatians, and, for a Japanese, had quite a sense of humour. On his arrival we discussed the prospects for the morrow over several whiskies, of which he had brought up a couple of bottles to fortify us against what was likely to be an unpleasant interlude.

On presenting ourselves at the Military Police Head -quarters the next morning, and after some delay in the lobby, we were led down the inevitable dingy, pickle-smelling corridor and ushered into a room brilliantly lit by one powerful bulb. An elderly and poorly dressed Chinese, his head drooping, was bound to a chair with his arms outstretched on a table; a Japanese was sitting on either side of him and a third standing at his back. The tips of his index and middle fingers were still bleeding and the table was a mess of blood. The Japanese were smoking cigarettes, one of them was casually toying with a pair of pliers; a small blood-stained towel, two empty cigarette packets and a saucer full of cigarette stubs littered the table. The vivid green of the empty packets contrasted strangely with the crimson mess in which they lay. With a great show of embarrassment and profuse apologies, we were hurriedly pushed to the door and bowed into the adjoining room, this time the right one. A small plump Japanese, spotlessly dressed in the uniform of the Military Police, was sitting at the table surrounded by our account books and a mass of notes. He looked somewhat perplexed and, at the same time, relieved to see us. I was not unduly worried; I felt quite confident that he would find nothing in our books on which to base charges of violation of currency regulations. For six hours we answered questions, arguing and explaining to the accompaniment of alternate shrieks and groans and appeals for mercy from the room next door. Whilst genuine enough, it was clearly staged for our benefit. It would have been impossible for one individual to have withstood this long period of torture Chinese, like other men, have only ten finger-nails. Human beings under terror, pain and torture, shriek and groan in much the same manner, particularly the Chinese. It was hard to tell, but at least three or four individuals must have been dealt with during the six hours that we were being questioned.

Upsetting as it was, I was determined not to show any outward reaction. Mizuno had paled to a grey-green and I remember hoping that I had not done the same. After the third hour, even with the help of endless cigarettes and glasses of tea, one's ability to concentrate on the repeated questions lagged, and there was the continual anticipation of the shrieks of pain. Sometimes there would be quiet for half an hour, then the tension of waiting was relieved by almost inhuman noises. At the end of five and a half hours I was literally soaked with sweat, which ran down my legs and squelched and oozed as I moved my toes inside my shoes. Long since ceasing to make any further explanations, I merely replied "yes" or "no". Our inquisitor also seemed to have lost some of his original interest in the affair, and finally closing the books, he handed them to us and announced that the investigation could be considered as finished. As he rose he apologised for the inconvenience he had caused us and instructed a servant to see us off the premises.

Returning to the mess, Mizuno and I finished a bottle of brandy between us and then retired. The next day I made an application for a travelling pass to Peking, which was accepted, and I was told that the pass would be sent to me. Expecting a delay of a day or two, I was not particularly disturbed when it did not arrive after the second day.

That evening we received a visit from Lieutenant Nakamura, who in pre-war days was a Tokyo lawyer and now acted as secretary to the Chief of Staff of the Imperial Japanese Army Headquarters at Kalgan. We talked about the weather, the possibility of a Japanese-Russian war, the bonds of friendship between Japan and America, the breeding of dogs and children, and, eventually, about our property. Now that we had more or less closed our business, was there any longer a reason why we should not dispose of this property? Firmly I stated that we were not interested, whereupon Nakamura became somewhat truculent and, hinting that it was not advisable to thwart His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Army, departed.

Two more days passed. It was late autumn and I had some pleasant walks in the country; the weather was perfect, days of warm, brilliant sunshine with the early autumn promise of cold nights to come. It was a delightful change from the heavy, soot-laden atmosphere of Tientsin.

Eventually I visited Nikoli at the pass-issuing office and was bluntly referred to the Military Police, where I was told that the Army had forbidden my departure. That night I prepared a good dinner and we invited Nakamura. Yes, he regretted that it was impossible for me to leave just now. It was well known that I had been active in the black market, thereby undermining the economic stability of the Mengchiang Government, a criminal offence which must be investigated. Certain people were being arrested and the investigation would probably take some time, but, with such a spacious house, he felt sure I would be comfortable, and, of course, with such a large garden and a tennis court, it would not be necessary for me to leave the premises for recreation.

A week, ten days passed, and still nothing

happened. Mizuno paid various calls and got little information, so I sent him back to our Tientsin office to report. Fortunately, I was still able to telephone Tientsin from my house and was in touch with the office practically every day.

After Mizuno's departure I saw Kageyama frequently. He was an unhappy specimen. Born and educated in America, he had fallen for Japanese propaganda and had given up his job in the States to join the Great Crusade which would bring a New Order to Asia. His American manner-isms were regarded with suspicion by the Japanese Army, for whom he worked as English interpreter, and, completely disillusioned; he appeared to live both physically and mentally upon recollections of happier clays. After Mizuno's departure, he always accompanied Nakamura on his not infrequent visits.

In another week the situation became clear. I was either to hand over our property to the Imperial Japanese Army, or I would be arrested and put in gaol pending trial, on charges of violation of currency laws and espionage. Finally, knowing perfectly well that I had no authority to do so, I signed away our property to the Kwan Tung Branch of His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Army. This was followed by a jovial dinner, with the prospective tenants wandering around between courses trying out the beds, flushing the water-closets and making themselves thoroughly familiar with their new home.

Escorted to the station in the Chief of Staff's car, I found a sleeping-compartment reserved for my use and, to the accompaniment of much bowing and sucking of breath, entrained for Peking.

A few weeks later I had the great satisfaction of forwarding a very curt missive from our Legal Department to Lieutenant Nakamura, for attention Chief of Staff, refuting my authority to lease the property and advising that this illegal occupation of British property had been referred to the Foreign Office of His Imperial Majesty's Government in Tokyo through the British Ambassador. I had the gratification of knowing that at least ex-lawyer Nakamura would appreciate this move.

January 1940 to February 1942

CHAPTER II

KIDNAPPED

By the beginning of the winter of 1941 the situation in the Far East deteriorated with the passage of each day. There was constant speculation as to the probable outbreak of hostilities between America and Japan. Chinese newspapers headlined the breakdown of Japanese-American negotiations in Washington and hopefully predicted war in the Pacific.

Most thinking people considered it inevitable and were mainly concerned with the probable duration: three months, six months, or a year at the outside! We were confident. I-lad we not rubbed shoulders with the Japanese in China for the past ten years since the Manchurian " incident "? They manufactured only the cheapest goods, incapable of standing up to hard wear and tear it was unlikely that their armaments would prove the exception; lack of raw materials made it impossible for them to engage in a prolonged war. They were copyists, completely lacking in initiative and in capable of sound military or civil administration; it was inconceivable that they could withstand the combined forces of the United States and Britain. What had we to fear from the Japanese?

The British and American community in Peking and Tientsin, and elsewhere in China, in response to repeated warnings from their Consular representatives to evacuate, at last began to face hard facts. People commenced to pack, to dispose of their houses, and flocked to the offices of the shipping companies in a last-minute endeavour to obtain passages to America and to the British Colonies.

I had already notified my head office in Shanghai of my intention to proceed to Hong Kong at the end of the year to join the Naval volunteers.

One afternoon, late in November, I was having tea and reading the day's news when my servant Liu came in, looking rather excited, which for him was most unusual. He said that he believed the house was being watched both day and night. He had not mentioned it before, as he was not sure and did not want to worry me, but he was now convinced. There were two Chinese on the job, he said, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Not only was the house being watched but that morning he had met Nikoli, who had told him he would be around to sec me in a day or two. It was already dark, but I went outside to have a look. True, there were several loafers in the street, but then this was one of the main thoroughfares, so I thought little more about it.

Later I had just finished dressing preparatory to going out to dinner, when the front-door bell rang. Liu opened the door and I heard him tell the callers that I was not at home, which struck me as being rather strange, and I walked over to the banisters to listen to the conversation that was still continuing at the front door. I immediately recognised Nikoli's voice and that of a Japanese. They insisted upon coming in and Liu showed them into the sitting room and, on the pretext of getting them a drink, retired to the servants' quarters. He soon reappeared with a tray of glasses, ice and whisky, and at the same time the coolie, armed with brushes and dusters, worked his way up the stairway and, once out of sight, bolted up the remaining stairs and into my room with a message from Liu that, whatever happened, I must not appear, otherwise, if Nikoli and his companion found out that he had lied to them, there was no knowing what might happen to him! I quite saw the point, but having just arrayed myself in my best suit, I failed to see the necessity for climbing into a closet or crawling under the bed, and told the coolie to return with a whisky and soda at the first opportunity. After all, they were having a drink, pressing my servant with questions, and from their point of view having a very successful time. No doubt they would go very shortly.

But on the contrary: they had one drink; they had another; they stayed an hour, an hour and a half, and I was that much late for my dinner appointment. They consumed more than half a bottle of whisky before they felt the urge to explore. Liu did his best to deter them but without success.

Long having given up interest in. the proceedings and hearing voices in the hallway below, I took it that they were on the point of leaving. But not at all. Slowly they came upstairs, discussing in rather bawdy terms the merits of certain whore-houses in the city. Too late to do any-thing else, I slid under the bed. Liu conducted the tour with admirable tact through the three bedrooms, at the same time giving them a lucid, though completely imaginative, account of the affairs of the various company wives who had occupied the house during past decades, and, with the Chinese servant's penchant for gossip, not without a few rather succulent truths. At last they retraced their steps and, promising to return next day, left in an alcoholic glow.

Covered in dust and feathers and determined to fire the coolie for not having cleaned under the bed, I emerged, two hours late for dinner.

The following evening Nikoli called again, accompanied by the Japanese gendarme, an old Kalgan buddy. He told me that he and his friend had been transferred to work in Tientsin and I wondered at the time what connection their transfer had with my movements. We talked for an hour or so on life in the port city and he left with the usual assurance that if I ever needed any assistance, I should remember that he had good connections with the Japanese and was always willing to help an old friend.

By this time I had begun to feel suspicious that some-thing serious was in the air. The next morning in the office I had a long talk with Mizuno-san and he too felt that there was some cause for anxiety and warned me never to leave the British Concession. He promised to make discreet enquiries. I had already filed an application for a pass to leave Tientsin for Shanghai, but had been continually put off. Mizuno learned eventually that the military authorities in Kalgan had put in a request that I be sent up there for further questioning, and for this reason the gendarmes were refusing to issue my travelling pass. This looked bad. I decided to send Mizuno along to the gendarme headquarters to make enquiries; he returned in a somewhat more optimistic frame of mind and said they had agreed to let him know definitely about my travelling permit within three or four days.

A British merchant boat was scheduled to leave from the British Concession wharf for Shanghai during the next day or two and it was suggested that I should go aboard and hide until the examination at the mouth of the river had been completed, but Mizuno thought this unwise. If I was caught, there would certainly be trouble.

On the morning of 6th December Mizuno received a telephone-call requesting my immediate presence at the pass-issuing office in order to complete the necessary formalities covering the permit, which they had decided to issue to me. This office was in the Japanese Concession and we discussed the advisability of my going. If I wanted the pass, there seemed to be no alternative, so I arranged to go with a couple of friends who also had to go over to collect their passes. Once there the Japanese who was in charge asked me to wait in the crowded room. An hour went by ; I seemed to have been forgotten. Slowly and methodically, and with much questioning, passes were being issued. Being very busy in the office, I told the clerk I would have to return later but he asked me to wait for another twenty minutes, explaining that my pass had not yet been completed. The time dragged and, making up my mind to go, I informed him that I would be back in the afternoon.

In the entrance lobby Nikoli's companion approached me with the request for a lift in my car, as he wanted to go to the station. As this was directly on my route, I agreed, but no sooner had I sat down in the car than he slammed the door, got into the front seat, produced a pistol and told the chauffeur to " get going ". The realisation that I was being kidnapped numbed me for a moment. My first reaction was to attempt to get out of the car, which by now, under directions from the Japanese, was heading deeper into the Japanese Concession, but there was little chance of getting away, and I would most probably have been shot. I decided to sit tight and see what happened.

Arriving at what appeared to be the small Japanese Army barracks, I was escorted by two armed soldiers to an office. The man who accompanied me made a brief report on his achievement to an Army colonel sitting at the desk, and was then dismissed. The colonel read from a document which he held, bowed gravely and instructed a Chinese to interpret. He spoke good English and informed me that I had just heard the warrant issued by the Imperial Japanese Army Head-quarters at Kalgan for my arrest in connection with certain acts that were considered as economic sabotage, with intent to undermine the stability of the Mengchiang currency, a criminal offence punishable under military law. I would he taken to Kalgan for court-martial. I argued and threatened dire international consequences, but at a curt command two soldiers forcibly dragged me from the room. I was pushed into a room with a couple of armchairs and a table upon which was a box of cigarettes, and left to myself. Lighting a cigarette I sat down visualising all manner of unpleasant possibilities; but I felt confident that it would be only a matter of hours before the wheels of diplomacy started to move. With the political situation as it was, I felt that publicity would probably have the desired result and I would eventually be set free with the usual profuse apologies that it was just another case of mistaken identity.

An hour passed and nothing happened. I tried the door — it was not locked. Opening it and looking up and down the deserted corridor, I decided to walk out boldly as if released. Reaching the entrance, and looking the tougher of the two sentries straight in the eye, I proceeded to walk out. He made no sign, but just as I was about to pass, the smaller, more insignificant of the two shouted something in a surprisingly gruff voice, and lowering their rifles, they barred the way. A second order brought six more soldiers at the double from the guard-house and I was roughly escorted back to another room, handcuffed, and the door locked.

In less than half an hour I was taken to a car waiting at the entrance and already overcrowded with soldiers. Two of them got out and I was pushed into the back seat with my plain-clothes guards, one on either side, and each with a soldier sitting on his knees, so that I could neither see nor be seen. Two more soldiers squeezed into the front seat with the driver. In less than fifteen minutes we had passed through the French Concession over the International Bridge and had arrived at the station. The station clock showed a few minutes

past two and I guessed that we were going to catch the two-twenty for Peking. This was rather encouraging. Being a Saturday, there were sure to be a few people going up to Peking for the week-end, and even if there was no chance of getting in touch with them, they would at least see me and realise that something unusual was going on. I was hurried out of the car and kept well out of sight in the booking-office. When the train came in, I was whisked across the platform to a compartment which had been reserved. My two companions pulled down the blinds and locked the compartment door.

We sat down; they offered me cigarettes -- one spoke a little English they showed me their pistols. I did my best to be pleasant and before long the atmosphere was easier. I had to find some way of getting out into the corridor, so complained of the heat and suggested that they open the door. After half an hour or so I got up and, stretching my legs, strolled out into the corridor. Standing at the far end of the corridor I saw a Greek girl whom I knew and, with my back to the entrance to my compartment, signalled to her to come over. She greeted me and I asked her to come in and sit down. My two guards were rather at a loss to know what to do; fortunately she spoke fluent Japanese and in a short while they were plying her with questions and thoroughly enjoying themselves. During the conversation I managed to get in a few words every now and again to show my predicament, and asked her to get in touch with Billy Christian, our managing director for North China, who was at that time in Peking, and let him know what had happened. Promising to do so immediately she arrived, she excused herself to the Japanese, wished me good luck, and returned to her own compartment. I felt a good deal better and knew if anything could be done, it would. We arrived in Peking with just sufficient time to change trains and within a quarter of an hour we were on the way to Kalgan.

The country was familiar to me and I considered jumping off the train as soon as it was dark, but every time I moved, one of the guards accompanied me. I was not even allowed in the lavatory alone.

There was no passport examination upon arrival this time, and, as a guest of the State, a car was waiting for me outside the station to take us to the Military Headquarters. It was now after one in the morning and, apart from sentries, the buildings were deserted. A sergeant in a dingy little office searched my pockets and took everything I had, including my wristwatch, and finally snapped a pair of handcuffs on my wrists. Writing out a receipt for me, he handed it to my companions and dismissed them, then led me across two open courtyards to a long low building. As he pushed open the door a shaft of bright light lit up the snow, which sparkled in the cold electric light. We entered a long corridor about four feet wide on one side of the building, the other side consisting of wooden bars forming a long row of cells. The two guards on duty came to meet us; my sergeant snapped out an order, and one of them, grabbing me by the arm, pulled me along the passage-way. Half-way down the line he produced a bunch of keys and, bending down, unlocked a small, barred wooden door about two and a half feet square. The cell floor was raised about two feet above the earthen floor of the corridor. I crawled in and the door was bolted.

The cell was empty, but in one corner was a dirty grey cotton blanket. I wrapped it around me as best I could stretch out on the board floor. Sleep seemed impossible under the glare of the electric light, yet many sleepers nearby rent the air with their snoring. It was horribly cold and the wooden hoards were hard. I closed my eyes: jumbled thoughts whirled through my brain . . . . I should be lucky if I got through this mess! Most probably I would be given the water treatment if I didn't die from disease. What would the office be able to do about it? Surely it would be only a matter of a day or two before one of our Japanese advisers came up and straightened things out? I was supposed to be at a party tonight too . . . what a time we had had last night! . . . everyone was very gay .. . What a comfortable bed I had in Tientsin . . . . I was in a train full of Japanese . . . I was chained to one on either side of me . . . Nikoli's face was laughing at me from the baggage rack on the other side of the compartment . . . . What a cruel dissipated face he had . . . now Okata of the pass-issuing office in Tientsin was sitting on my chest and he was holding both my wrists. I struggled but he would not release my hands . . . it was daylight, and I was lying on the floor . . . . Okata was no longer on my chest but he was still holding on to my wrists . . . somebody was holding them . . . . God! Where am I? Slowly it all came back to me.

January 1940 to February 1942

CHAPTER III

PRISON IN MONGOLIA

I was stiff, cold and hungry. Perhaps today I should be released; after all, I had arrived late and there may well have been no more convenient place to put me. I heard the jingle of keys and approaching footsteps; surely they were coming to release me? A seedy-looking individual peered at me through the bars and passed on. Someone shouted an order, a whistle blew, people stirred; doors were opened and a stream of figures went by my cell. More warders appeared, and each as he passed looked in; some spoke, others laughed and spat at me, and a few showed no reaction at all. Within a short time, probably about ten minutes, the inmates returned. There seemed to be a good deal of shuffling about, and then the jingle of keys, and the corridor lapsed into silence.

Hours seemed to pass. Now the sun was up and one could see a small patch of blue sky through the barred window, a mere aperture about two feet by six inches let into the wall near the ceiling. The walls of the cell were concrete with wooden bars from ceiling to floor on the side facing the corridor, with a small barred door on the level of the wooden floor, which was roughly ten by twelve feet.

The silence was broken by a general rustle of movement, the occasional clink of metal; it came nearer. The small hatch let into the cell door was pushed open and a dirty-looking tin bowl was thrust in. I took it eagerly --- it was comfortingly warm as I raised it to my mouth with both hands a watery mess of beans and a few grains of rice. Twenty-four hours had gone by since I had had anything to eat or drink; I was very thirsty and could have dealt with six bowls! In my ignorance I asked for more, but the warder grinned and shook his head.

Footsteps of several people, the jingle of keys, they are coming nearer and nearer, they must be coming to release me Yes! The warder stopped at my cell and, fumbling with the lock, opened the door. I got up in anticipation, eager to get out as soon as I could. He waved me back and stepping aside, beckoned, and four large Mongols scrambled awkwardly through the opening. Well! 0……. at least I was going to have company.

They were all well-dressed, in fact overdressed for Mongols. Two of them had on black lambskin coats and suede-leather trousers tucked into high leather boots. The third wore a long fur-lined Chinese silk gown of a brilliant peacock-blue. The fourth, somewhat older, was more conservative in his dress, which consisted of the usual tanned goatskin trousers of a rather nondescript mustard-brown, lined with sheepskin ; he had no undershirt but wore a dark mulberry-red woollen jacket also lined with coarse white sheepskin, and his trousers were held up by a bright-green silken sash. He had the heavy features of the Mongol and looked, as he proved to be, completely bewildered. The other three were in their late twenties. They wore new clothes and appeared to be well-to-do, and were more than likely in the pay of either the Japanese or the Soviets. Judging by their leather boots, I put them down as Outer Mongolian Soviet agents arrested by the Japanese. They would soon be relieved of further pondering over their fate: the Japanese, intensely jealous of Sovietised Outer Mongolia, gave them little quarter.

Crossing their legs, they sat down in a close circle with their hands tucked into their sleeves, staring at one another with completely blank faces. In a little while one of them yawned, another belched, their expressionless faces relaxed slightly, and they obviously began to feel more at home; soon they were whispering to one another. It was not long before the warder put a stop to that, and once again they relapsed into silence. Soon one had fallen asleep, a second began to nod and his head dropped to his chest. 1 decided it was a good idea and stretched out on the boards.

I awoke to the sound of a key turning in the lock and the door of the cell opened. This time I was not disappointed. The warder beckoned to me to come out. I threw off the blanket and hastily got out before he could change his mind, but was sent back to get the blanket. That was encouraging: I felt confident that they would soon straighten things out and at least put me in more comfortable quarters. I followed the warder to an office where there were three or four desks round the sides of the room, at which clerks were seated, idly sipping glasses of hot tea. In the middle of the room an officer was sitting at a desk reading a newspaper. As I entered he put down the paper and nodded to me in a friendly manner. He was a wizened little man with glasses, a small sparse moustache and quite a human, kindly face. Kageyama then entered the room. I was very relieved to see him. «You sure got yourself into a jam this time! I will do all I can to help you. Now let's see what this guy has to say. He's all right, but treat him polite."

«You understand why you are here?» asked the officer, through Kageyama.

«No, I have no idea and would like an explanation."

He leaned forward in his chair, seeming annoyed,

and addressed me in a most belligerent tone. «He says that you are lying. Did you not deliberately contravene the State currency laws? Do you not know that under military law this is a most serious offence and that you are here to face a court-martial on these charges? Did you not intentionally trick His Imperial Majesty's Army over the question of property? Do you know that you are under suspicion of espionage? Certainly you understand! And yet you have the impudence to ask His Imperial Majesty's Army for an explanation! Take my advice," Kageyama added, «and don't say any more."

«All right, but please tell him that I decline to make any statement on the matter until I hear from my Tientsin office." «O.K. But I'll just tell him that you hope to have an opportunity to explain your case later."

This seemed to quieten him.
«He wants to know what you think of the present political situation," said Kageyama.

«Tell him that with the war practically over in China we are looking forward to a long era of peace and prosperity in the Far East," I replied, lying as best I could. His face relaxed and he pulled out a packet of cigarettes and offered me one. "He says Japan is indeed a peace-loving country, but it is unfortunate that the present politicians in America and England do not really understand her."

"Yes," I answered, "I have thought that myself at times, but the Chinese have a much clearer conception of Japan's mission in Asia." He grunted, and, opening a drawer, drew out some papers which he pushed across the desk to me.

"He wants you to fill up these papers. It's just your registration for the accommodation you are about to enjoy as a guest of the Emperor. Fill them up."

While I was writing the necessary particulars — age, birthplace, father's and mother's name and religion, and deciding whether I was a Catholic, Protestant, an atheist, heathen or Communist — an orderly appeared with a bundle and threw it down at my feet. Had I any peculiarities? How many birth-marks? Had I the full use of my limbs? What were my habits? Had I any illegitimate children? What was my length? I called on Kageyama for an explanation. "Oh! they probably mean your height. Anyway, you need not fill in all that nonsense. Sign here and I'll give it to him. . Now take your clothes off and get into these on the floor"

I took off my coat, jacket and trousers, sorted out the bundle and found there was a light cotton Chinese-style jacket and trousers of a dirty white, and a khaki-coloured drill coat and trousers. I proceeded to get into the underpants, when Kageyama remarked: " He says you must strip."

"But hell, I'll freeze to death in that stuff."
"Yes, maybe, but those are the regulations."

The sleeves of the jacket came half-way down my arms and the trousers about six inches below the knees. "Take off your socks too," said Kageyama.

"But there aren't any others here."

"You don't get any, or shoes. I guess this is about all for today. This guy will take you to a cell," indicating the man who had brought in the clothes. "Now you are an official prisoner, you must bow low to this officer before you leave, and take my advice, behave yourself here, otherwise you will find yourself in trouble. See you later." I turned to the desk, grudgingly bowed and left, followed by the orderly.

We entered the building in which the cells were located, where I was handed over to the warder, who apparently found my appearance very amusing. There must have been eighteen cells at least and each one was full, including the one at which we stopped. He opened the door and motioned me to get in, indicating that I was to have the position at the end of the row next to the bars. The door shut behind me, the other inmates made room and I sat down. This did not satisfy the warder, who told me to kneel facing the wall, as the others were doing. After a few moments he went away and every-one relaxed and strained their necks to have a look at the latest addition to their cell. Obviously a White Russian !

There were six of us on each side. Next to me was a Japanese, the remaining four being Chinese. On the opposite side were two Japanese in uniform, both privates, and four Chinese. With the exception of the Japanese, we were all clothed in the same way. I noticed that the others had a neat roll of cotton blankets in front of them and that the bottom one was slightly pulled out so that their knees rested on it rather than on the bare boards. Kneeling on board takes a lot of practice and it was not long before I had the most excruciating pains. I was wondering how much longer I could stand it, when there was a general stir and a Chinese appeared with a dozen bowls on a tray. The warder opened the little door and passed in the "tiffin ", a thick porridge of beans and kaoliang, a species of coarse millet. It was hot, but lacked salt, and was completely tasteless -- with the aid of chopsticks it was greedily swallowed. In less than a couple of minutes the bowls were empty and piled by the grille; there were a few belches and we settled down again for the afternoon.

By now I had reached the limit of my endurance as far as kneeling was concerned and sat with my legs drawn up to one side, ready to assume the kneeling position if the warder approached. Others were doing this too, but some appeared quite content to kneel; they were probably the older inmates. Now and again there was a whispered

conversation; someone would get up to relieve himself at the small tin latrine let into the boards at the far corner on the other side. The stench was bad enough from where I sat, but, thank God, I was not next to it! A whistle was blown, whereupon everyone relaxed, turned around from the wall and sat with crossed legs facing each other. This was bearable.

Now I had a chance to look over my fellow criminals. Directly opposite were the two Japanese privates with un-intelligent and expressionless features; next to them was an old Chinese, over sixty and practically skin and bone. He coughed continuously and I put him down as a probable T.B. case. His neighbour was certainly in the right place: dark skin, chin covered with stubby hair, small shifty eyes and a nose that at one time had been broken, a thin line where his lips should have been, almost identical with the scar that ran from across his right temple and upper cheek to the side of his nose. By the latrine sat a man in his late forties, fat and sleek from good living, a recently-shaven head, and hands that had never felt the satisfaction of manual labour, most probably a merchant and a new arrival. I studied my neighbour, a good-looking but arrogant Japanese of about thirty. He took absolutely no notice of anyone and sat with his legs crossed, his hands clasped on his lap and his eyes closed. He continued in this attitude until he left us about a week or so later. I often wondered what was passing through his mind — no doubt just religious remorse. It was not until some time after he had left that I found out that the three Japanese were in for a cooler on the grounds of having dangerous thoughts — Communistic, no doubt. On his other side was a poor syphilitic-looking specimen, covered with skin sores. He might have been anything from a pimp to a dope fiend, or both. At the other end of the line sat a rather fine-looking old man, sunburnt and with ruddy cheeks, a black drooping moustache, and a few long straggling whiskers, so beloved by the Chinese, drooping sparsely from his chin. He had roughened hands and was probably a farmer -peasant. Beside him sat a younger man of the same type, not intelligent in appearance, but clean and fresh with the bright eyes of youth. What could he be in this hell-hole for? His arms were folded over his chest and he was rocking gently to and fro with his eyes closed. Occasionally the old man would murmur to him.

As it began to get dark, the lights were switched on. We sat . . . the cold was intense. Feet and hands had no feeling, although one could get some semblance of warmth into the latter by continual rubbing and putting them under one's armpits; but only the newcomers did this, the old-timers were indifferent. Another whistle blew and an order in Chinese was shouted up the corridor. " Exercise! Exercise! One, two, three, four -- one, two, three, four -- one, two . . ." Everyone jumped to his feet. Frozen as we were, this was the one opportunity we had to warm up. We jumped up and down, pummelled each other on the back, exercised our arms and legs. To this frenzied activity I noticed that there was one exception — a Japanese who took his position near the bars at the opposite corner to me and performed the most approved P.T. exercises in time with the prescribed tempo. Everyone kept an eye on him and in a short while he shouted above the din of thumping feet, " One, two, three, four ! " and immediately all in the cell ceased their gambols and per-formed in some degree of unison the exercise he happened to be doing at that moment. By then the warder had appeared and, looking with obvious satisfaction at such a well-disciplined cell, passed on and we once again got on with the all-important task of warming up. All too soon a blast on the whistle put a stop to this frivolity, and my companions commenced unrolling their blankets and preparing for bed. I had none, but fortunately the guard appeared and, when I indicated my need, he brought me three thin cotton blankets. I soon found there was a special way of folding the blankets to get the maximum warmth out of them. As I was struggling with mine one of the Japanese privates came over and made it up for me. The first blanket was spread out on the floor single, in the middle of this was placed the second blanket doubled, and in the middle of that the third blanket folded lengthwise into three thicknesses. The edges of the single blanket were then folded over, making a narrow sack, and the whole rolled up and placed against the wall pending the "tuck-yourself-in" signal.

The following morning we were awakened just after dawn by the usual blasts on a warder's whistle. Reluctantly we crawled out of our sacks, folded our blankets into a neat pile and placed them against the wall, then stood to attention on either side of the cell. A Chinese boy appeared with a rack of tooth-brushes, a dozen tin mugs and a bowl of coarse salt. In turn we each drew a tooth-brush, a mug half filled with water, and a pinch of salt. Revolted by the thought of who might have used before me the wet and well-worn brush, I took up my position in turn over the stinking latrine and performed the necessary ablutions. Salt, I found, was a very excellent dentifrice. We usually drank all but one mouthful of water, with which we rinsed our mouths of the salt. Once again the whistle blew, cells were opened and a depressing assortment of humanity began to file past. In a moment our barred aperture was opened, and we all crept out and lined up in the corridor facing the cell. At a word of command from the warder, we turned right and marched out of the building into the courtyard, in the middle of which was a double line of concrete washbasins coated with a layer of ice. In the far corner was a large concrete trough and a pile of ice-covered tin basins. Selecting one each, we dipped it into the trough, at the same time trying to avoid getting a basin full of broken ice. The morning wash consisted of doing as little washing with as much show and noise as possible. When everyone had washed to the warder's satisfaction, we were again lined up and marched to a small outhouse where fifty to sixty little towels hung, suspended on strings from one side of the room to the other. Ice had already formed

on the straggling whiskers of all and it was almost impossible to wipe it off with the towel. We were again marched into the yard and lined up at attention, facing towards the East and the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. Our warder took up his position two or three paces to one side, and at the word of command we all made a deep and reverent bow towards His Imperial Majesty.

On returning to the corridor, I noticed that everyone started to undress. Outer shirts, pants and underpants were stripped off and thrown in a pile on the floor. An inspection party, consisting of the prison doctor accompanied by a couple of guards, was working its «ay up from the other end of the corridor. The first of our group stepped forward and opened his mouth wide, into which the doctor peered, and then turned each ear to the doctor for inspection. The patient then lifted his shirt, exposing his private parts, and, making a right-about-turn, bowed to the wall and at the same time lifted his shirt-tails, to reveal his bottom to the critical glance of the medico. The speed with which this was done down the line gave the effect of a rather bizarre can-can chorus. The medical inspection completed, the guard picked up the discarded clothes from the floor and threw them through the door of the cell, into which we quickly scrambled. The cell in which we had left our orderly piles of blankets was now in confusion. The blankets were in a confused heap in the middle of the floor, on top of which had been flung our jackets, pants and underpants. The door was locked and we were left to sort out our clothes and refold our blankets. It was impossible to decide which were one's own particular garments, and it was merely a matter of grabbing the nearest.

A shaft of sunshine revealed an atmosphere thick with dust from the blankets as they were shaken and folded into shape. By the time our morning soup arrived, the coughing caused by the dust had subsided, and we were all kneeling facing the wall.

There was nothing to relieve the monotony. Occasion-ally one would hear a door opened and a number called. At noon bowls of gruel were passed through the square hole in the door. The whistle blew and we relaxed and sat on the floor with our legs crossed, facing the row on the other side of the cell. Occasionally there would be a whispered word or two, a belch or worse, or someone would get up to relieve himself at the foul latrine. This was a small galvanised tray about six inches deep, a foot wide and a foot and a half long, with a couple of handles at either end, and we took turns in emptying it twice a day, morning and evening. By the end of the day it was practically overflowing and to lift it out of the hole in the boards and negotiate the cell door without spilling any on the floor was no easy matter. It was emptied into a small chute let into the far side of the yard wall. It seldom emptied clean. Anything left had to be removed with the fingers, which one cleaned by wiping them on nearby walls on the way back to the cell. There was no water available.

Day after day passed, empty days that barely registered the passage of time : the morning wash, inspection, the fight for one's blankets and clothes, soup intervals, P.T. occasion-ally in the mornings and afternoons. If the guard felt so inclined, we were taken into the yard for about fifteen minutes' exercise. The yard was about twenty-five by ten yards and was surrounded by a wall at least twelve feet high, topped by an electrified wire fence and network of wire overhead. The ground was rough and hard for bare feet, but it did at least help to warm us for half an hour. Occasionally during the day someone would particularly irritate the guard and one would hear a stream of abuse in a mixture of Chinese and Japanese, a jingle of keys and the dull thud of a wooden club on flesh howls for mercy, cries of pain and then silence.

The greater part of the afternoon was usually spent in de-lousing. Turning one's undershirt inside out, one carefully went over all the seams where the majority of the lice and their eggs were to be found. Occasionally one would come across a fat old louse, far from home, but the majority spent the daylight hours with their heads dug into the seams. They were easy to squash between the thumb-nails, but the eggs were small and difficult to see, and one got little satisfaction from them. In spite of daily attacks on these pests, it was quite impossible to eliminate them. However diligently the search went on during the day, at night-time, with the warmth circulating from the blankets and the proximity of other bodies, they came out from hiding in their hundreds, and one's whole body seemed to be crawling. In the beginning there was the continual desire to scratch; sleep was impossible; but as the days passed, reaction became dulled; they were still there but one did not mind so much. If it was convenient, a search would be made. If not, what did it matter?

Ten days passed and I had had no news from the outside. What was the office doing about me? What were the Consular people doing? Surely somebody would be trying to get me out? About two days later the warder opened the cell and, looking at me, shouted "Number 98" in Chinese. This was the first indication that I had of my number. It did not take long to realise what was expected of me and I quickly crawled out of the door. A guard led me to another building and, knocking at a door, pushed me into a small office thick with cigarette smoke. It smelt of that peculiar straw-and-pickle odour, which pervades the atmosphere wherever there are Japanese soldiers, but it was warm — the belly of the small iron stove was red-hot. The same sergeant who had interviewed me the day after my arrival was sitting behind the desk and in an arm-chair next to the stove was Lieutenant Nakamura and standing behind him, Kageyama.

The desk was strewn with newspapers and as I came in, Nakamura, looking very excited, put aside the

paper he had been reading and started immediately to talk. He paced up and down the office and, grabbing a paper from the desk, pointed to the headlines. He laughed, pounded the table, shouted and gesticulated; tears began to trickle down his cheeks. Clutching the newspaper in his hand, he strode over to a map of the Far East hanging on the wall, and pointed to Honolulu, Hong Kong and Singapore. Working himself into a state of hysteria, he collapsed, both laughing and crying, into his chair. My expression must have been particularly blank, as he waved at Kageyama, indicating that he should translate this hysterical tirade. I realised that something of extreme importance had happened, probably war. Kageyama put his hand in his pocket, produced a cigarette-case and offered it to the Lieutenant, who took one and indicated that I should do the same.

"Well, how are you getting along asked Kageyama." A lot has happened since we last met. Japan is at war with America and Britain and we have destroyed the entire American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour. We have sunk two British battleships off Singapore and the remainder of the British fleet is fleeing back to the Indian Ocean, pursued by the Imperial Japanese Navy and our Eagles. Our land forces are occupying Honolulu, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Soon we shall have Singapore, and then India will be ours for the taking, and Japan's mission in Asia will be accomplished. The peoples of the East will be freed from the burden of British Imperialism and, united with Japan, will enjoy the greater freedom of the New Order in East Asia."

The Lieutenant added that the Japanese were magnanimous in victory and no harm would come to the British and American nationals. Of course it would be necessary to detain a few individuals who had acted contrary to the interests of His Imperial 'Majesty the Emperor, but the majority would be free to co-operate industrially in the development of Greater East Asia. In the meantime, Lieutenant Nakamura, having dried his tears of joy with his white silk handkerchief, had recovered his composure. Nervously Puffing at his cigarette, he asked Kageyama for my reactions.

Having had some experience of the manner in which the Japanese were accustomed to present their news reports, I did not for one moment believe these extravagant claims. That war had broken out there seemed to be little doubt, but I could not believe that the situation was as serious as Nakamura stated. From my own point of view, the fact that the war had started was in itself the final blow to my hopes of getting out of this hell-spot. Now I began to realise why I had heard nothing from Tientsin. I had been at Kalgan for twelve days. The Pacific war had commenced two days after my arrival. The more territory the Japanese seized, the longer it would take to drive them out. I might well be here a year or two, and under these conditions the odds against survival were fairly heavy. "Tell Nakamura I am appalled to hear this news." There was little left to say; I was trapped. Nakamura apparently sensed my depression.

"Your factory in Tientsin has not been closed, and when your case here has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, you will return to Tientsin to your work."
Extraordinary as this statement was, it certainly sounded somewhat more hopeful. I asked Kageyama if he had been in touch with my Tientsin office.

"Sure, we have sent for one of your Japanese advisers and probably he will be here in a few days." Nakamura then said something to Kageyama. "He wants to know if there is any-thing you need."

"Yes, plenty! First of all I want something warm to put on. I am frozen," showing my feet, which were swollen and cracked with chilblains. "The food is hardly sufficient to keep one alive."

Kageyama smiled. "It's no use my telling him that.

His enquiry was purely a polite formality. You forget you are the guest of His Majesty the Emperor. The correct answer is to bow and express your appreciation of such comforts as you enjoy. I'll tell him that since you are a foreigner, you find this way of living a little uncomfortable."

Nakamura, preoccupied with his thoughts, nodded, and waving his hand, implied that the interview was over. "You had better go. If there is anything I can do for you, I will do what I can. Ask to see me again in a week or ten days if nothing has happened in the meantime." Soon I was back in my cell with all the time in the world to contemplate the latest developments. In the interval that I had been away, the noon meal had been served. On the next round of the warder, I said that I had had nothing to eat. He laughed and pointed to the Buddha-like figure next to me who, I gathered, had eaten it.

The following afternoon the cell was unlocked and we were all told to strip. The syphilitic old wreck whispered "Bath! Bath! " This sounded too good to be likely, but with our clothes in a bundle under our arms, we were marched across the courtyard, through a door in the wall and across another courtyard, where we were told to deposit our clothes in a heap at the entrance to a small building from which a cloud of steam was issuing. It was a small room, about ten feet square, with a large concrete tub occupying about a third of the area. There was a rush for the tub and six managed to squeeze in. Needless to say, our Japanese cell-mates were among the first. The bath was four feet deep, and with six people in it the water came well up to their chests. The unfortunates who were unable to get in, stood shivering around the side, scooping out water with a few old tins and pouring it over their bodies. How I envied those in the bath! In a few minutes the warder told them to get out. One by one they

reluctantly clambered out, red and steaming. As one got out, another climbed in. Taking the first opportunity, I hopped in, and out a damned sight quicker; the water was practically boiling. Everyone laughed; I tried again and still found it too hot. After my third attempt, time was up, and hurriedly mopping myself with a wet towel, I followed the rest of the party across the yard. This wanton disregard for nature, a boiling hot bath followed by a walk across snow-covered courtyards in a temperature of about ten degrees below zero, would, I thought, most certainly result in pneumonia at the very least. As we passed through the wall dividing the two courtyards, there were four separate piles of clothing on the ground and we grabbed one garment from each.

Back in our cell we started putting on our clean clothes. I had already got my shirt and underpants on when I noticed most of the others, still red from the bath, carefully examining the seams of their fresh clothes. At first glance my jacket appeared to be reasonably clean. I examined it more closely: the seam down the middle of the back was all right ; I turned the sleeves inside out to find the join under the armpits and along the arm thick with lice eggs. My Japanese neighbour had also had a find and, rolling his shirt into a bundle, he threw it over to the door. I did the same. On the warder's next visit the Japanese got up and, thrusting the two shirts through the bars, asked for clean ones. Much to my surprise, the warder meekly took them away and in a short time arrived back with others. I examined these and although there were still a few eggs here and there, they were insufficient to worry about. In any case, they were in all the blankets — one would never be free of them. The bath had had a good effect on everyone; the father and son from the country livened up and whispered to one another. The crook and the old man on the opposite side were also ex-changing remarks. The two Japs opposite me were tracing characters on the floor. I felt a little more cheerful myself. This effect must have been felt amongst the occupants of the other cells too, for very soon we heard the warder, in a vile rage, shouting at the top of his voice. We heard him fumbling with the keys and the bar of a nearby cell being slid back, then three or four dull thuds, followed by prolonged whimpering, and the noise of the bolt sliding into place.

I was beginning to lose count of the days, so I spent the morning scratching a calendar on the wall with a button off my outside jacket. For lack of something better to do, we had devised a crude sundial, tracing the course of the small shaft of sunlight that penetrated the dimness of the cell from about nine in the morning till three in the afternoon. We were close to the railway, and from the regularity of certain trains we had a fairly accurate idea of the time, although it seemed only to make the passage of time more slow. To the Chinese this probably meant little; they have only a vague perception of time as we understand .it. This was the first occasion in my life when I had been deprived of the means of telling the time and I realised, with rather a feeling of disgust, how much we depend and regulate our lives on the methodical round of the clock: the eternal race against time ; the compromise of cramming more and more into the hour. It is only from the timeless vacuum of a cell that one can see the real futility of such a struggle.

The rumour was about that everyone would be tried before the end of the year. The daily routine became the most important thing in one's life: the brushing of teeth, the exquisite shock of the icy water on one's face, the ensuing scramble for a towel that had not already been used and frozen stiff ; the ridiculous formality of the how to the East ; the medical inspection which followed, lacking only the appropriate music for the complete burlesque touch, the final scramble for one's clothes ; the meal-time breaks.

Eagerly as the arrival of our mess was anticipated, there were times when I could not eat it, and on such occasions I made a point of giving it to one or other of the Chinese. This annoyed my Japanese neighbour so much that one day he finally snatched it back from the dark-skinned son of the underworld on the opposite side, whose turn it happened to be to have my left-overs. I snatched the bowl away from him and handed it back to the Chinese. The Japanese bent forward and stretched out his hand to grab the bowl again. Quickly the Chinese put the bowl on the floor and, clutching the outstretched arm, pulled the Japanese forward on his knees, at the same time giving him a terrific blow over the head with his other hand. The Jap, regaining his balance, sprang at the Chinese, knocking him against the wall with a sickening thud and, as he rolled over, got on top of him, pinning him against the floor and wall. Not to be outdone, the Chinese buried his teeth in the forearm of the Japanese who, momentarily releasing his grip, gave him his chance, and bracing his foot against the wall, the Chinese lurched forward and succeeded in flooring my neighbour. With one hand at his throat and the other fending off blows, he and the Japanese rolled across the floor. It was not long before the noise of the struggle attracted the warder. Frantically blowing his whistle and struggling with the padlock, he had hardly opened the grille before two guards armed with semi-baseball bats scrambled in. In a moment it was over. The Chinese, who was on top, received several heavy blows across the trunk and shoulders and with a piercing cry rolled over, catching as he did so a full blow on the back of his head. The two guards then proceeded to kick him in the stomach and in the crutch. He made a half-hearted effort to struggle to his feet and, receiving another sickening blow on his head, slumped to the floor unconscious. Blood, flowing freely from his head wound, spattered over his clothes and the floor. Meanwhile the miserable Jap crawled to the wall and resumed his Buddha-like position with his hands joined and his eyes closed. The guards, who had kept up a continual stream of abuse, grasped the Chinese by the legs and, pulling him over to the cell door, pushed him

out into the corridor, where he fell in an unconscious heap on the earthen floor. The door was locked and he was carried off between the two guards. The next morning the three Japanese were removed, and the Chinese was never seen again. If he was not disposed of immediately, it was unlikely in any case that he would live long without medical attention. Now we had more room and there was a general feeling of relief and a much more friendly atmosphere.

The next morning I asked the doctor if I might see Kageyama-san. He nodded his head at Kageyama's name, so I gathered that he understood. Two days went by and nothing happened, then on the third, late in the afternoon, the warder came up and pushed a book through the bars to me. It was the Bible. With somewhat mixed feelings I turned the pages, wondering whether it was offered merely as reading matter or with the intention of preparing me for a better world. Looking at the fly-leaf, I noticed the name of one of my missionary friends who was still in Kalgan, and I guessed that Kageyama had borrowed it as the only reading matter permissible. It was a Revised Version, Old and New Testaments. I started at the beginning, absorbing every word. I had not read the Bible since my school days, and found the simplicity of the phrasing fascinating. The local colour and the naïve manner in which the story in the Old Testament is unfolded makes decidedly entertaining reading. I became absorbed and read throughout the daylight hours.

Christmas Day came and passed. Two more Chinese had been added to our cell, one a man of about thirty, who took the place of the Japanese Buddha. He spoke with the clear tones of the Peking Chinese and we had many snatched conversations. He was a signalman and had been arrested for tampering with the switches and wrecking a passenger train, the point being, of course, that it had run into a stationary troop train drawn up at a siding of the Tatung station, and this had resulted in the death of about forty Japanese soldiers. He knew that he would be executed and so did I he was only surprised that they had not shot him, or worse, on the spot. He seemed content to die in the knowledge that he had achieved success from his point of view. His fierce hatred and contempt for the Japanese gave him fanatical courage. These were the people who, by their constant pin -pricks, were making the occupation of North China by the Japanese a constant liability rather than an asset.

The New Year was drawing near and an effort was obviously being made to try the majority of the cases. Every morning from about nine onwards one heard the jingle of keys, the sliding of bolts and the summoning of various in-mates to court. In a few days the old man on the opposite side was called. He never returned and we hoped he had been released. The following day the fat merchant next to the latrine was summoned: after an absence of two hours he returned, much upset. Immediately the guard had locked the door and walked off down the corridor, he was anxiously questioned, and we learned that he had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment. If he had received two years for his paltry black-market dealing, then most probably I should get anything from five to ten depressing.

The food got worse, no more beans and only the cheapest of coarse millet, kaoliang. My loins and belly were a mass of bites which across the latter had developed into a blood-stained rash ; my hair was filthy and my scalp constantly irritated with lice ; my face was covered with a month-old stubble, my feet were swollen with chilblains and I was constantly frozen. There seemed to be little excuse for existing.

There were still two days before the New Year and I had but faint hope that my case would be dealt with before the end of the year. On the 29th of December I was called out. Thank God, at last it would be settled, one way or the other. Again I was taken to the sergeant's office and was much relieved to see Kageyama. "You are looking a pretty good mess. How are you making out?" he enquired, offering me a cigarette. The sergeant seemed to be taking little interest in matters and continued to write.

"How much longer is this going on, for Christ's sake? I have had about enough. What is the news?"

" Mizuno came up a few days ago from Tientsin and I tried to get them to allow you to see him, but they would not agree. He saw the Chief of Staff and tried to arrange a compromise, but they insist upon a court-martial. However, he did get them to promise to settle the case within a month. I thought that they might do it before the New Year but there is no hope of that now. The court closes tomorrow and they will not sit again for another three months, but I understand that your case may be a special sitting."

"What is the war news?

"Hong Kong has surrendered and Singapore is expected to fall any time now. The British and American Far Eastern Navy has been completely demolished. When we have taken Singapore, we shall push on to Burma and India. Within a year the war will be over. Did you get the Bible I sent you? It's the only book that they would allow."

The sergeant, who up till now had been writing, put down his pen and, pushing his chair back, strode over to the map hanging on the wall. I realised that I was in for another little discourse on the achievements of Japan. He spoke for what seemed like ten minutes and then, turning to Kageyama, asked him to interpret. It was merely a more detailed account of what Kageyama had already told me. "He wants to know when you think the British will surrender and ask for peace."

"Never," I replied, having had about enough of this interview, which seemed to be peculiarly unproductive.

"He says there is nothing further and you may return to your quarters."

That afternoon we had another bath. This time the water did not seem so hot and I managed to be one of the first in. It was heavenly. Wang, the signalman, was also amongst the first in ; he scrubbed my back vigorously with a towel and I did the same for him. I began to feel clean and alive once more, with still some incentive to exist, and I wondered how this affected Wang, who seemed to take his fate so casually. He was yet young and strong, he had a wife, but she was ten years his senior and he had for the past half-year been living with a young girl who in another few months would be bearing him a child. He would never see the child or the girl again. She was a good cook too, that seemed to be his only regret. On returning from the bath I noticed that a new guard was on duty, tall for a Japanese and powerfully built. His small eyes, sunk in a completely characterless face, had the shiftiness of a bully.

Lining us up in the corridor, he looked us over, commenting on any peculiarities he happened to notice. Arriving in front of me he laughed, pulled my nose and said something about "big nose" in Chinese. The merchant who had so recently received his two-year sentence was made to bend over facing the entrance to the cell, and the guard, lifting his boot, gave him a kick on the bottom. As he was rather large and heavy, this did not have the desired result, but by the time the second kick had been administered, the unfortunate fellow lost little time in scrambling into the cell ; next carne the young farmer. We all had to go through it; it was my turn, a swift kick in the rump and I was practically lifted through the door. It was painful, but having had one's turn it was not without its amusing side — the expression of anticipation before the kick and the pained surprise at the moment of impact. For days I had quite an uncomfortable seat. So far we had been lucky with the guards but we all realised that from now on we could expect trouble.

The stench of the latrine, the complete lack of privacy in relieving the calls of nature, the lice, the lack of adequate food, and on top of it all, the intense cold, made life a misery. Only once or twice during the day were we able to get some semblance of warmth into our bodies, but half an hour after P.T. we were cold again. The syphilitic was failing with each day that passed; he had a constant cough and at night wheezed heavily. Finally one morning he declared himself unable to get up. The warder came, swore at him, and kicked him, but by now he was beyond caring; he lay down all day. During the medical examination the doctor had a look at him. The next morning he was dead. Two guards came in, rolled him in his blanket and dragged him out.

New Year's Day: we were left to our own devices by the warders throughout the day, there was no medical inspection and we returned to our cells to receive an extra ration in the form of sticky rice-flour dumplings. For the first time I felt that I had had enough to eat. With the guards paying little or no attention to us, we had the first real opportunity to converse without fear of consequences. From the old farmer at the end of the row I learned that he and his nephew came from a village twenty miles south-west of Kalgan. He was the head-man of the village, which from time to time was occupied by the Chinese guerrilla forces, and he had been taken by the Japanese on their most recent punitive expedition against the guerrillas. His village was in "no-man's-land" ; too far away from the Japanese lines of communication for them to place a permanent garrison there and yet within striking distance of the garrison at the nearest railway point. Both the guerrillas and the Japanese levied contributions of grain, and the Japanese on their visits would demand sheep, pigs and chickens. This had been going on for nearly two years and the village was desperately poor. On the last visit of the Japanese a small amount only of coarse grain was to be had, and for this reason they had arrested the head-man and his nephew on the ground that they had been supplying the guerrillas. He considered it merely a form of blackmail, as the Japanese knew full well that sooner or later representatives from the village would bargain for his release. If the amount asked was too much and no settlement was reached, then eventually he would be sentenced to work on the roads or the railway with his nephew. They were not perturbed; if the Japanese expected them to work, then at least they would be fed, and once out of here, there would be chances of escape.

The spirit of these people gave them a courage which they bore with naturalness and quiet confidence. It was not the fiery courage of the young revolutionist, but the courage born of generations of suffering from the primeval struggle against nature itself for very existence. Flood and famine had hardened these people to withstand suffering; disease early eliminated the weaker ones. From time to time China had been overrun by foreign invaders from the North. On each occasion these invaders had been absorbed and, strengthened by the fusion, a new China had been born. The periodical rebirth of China is of necessity painful and slow; generations pass before the ultimate end is achieved, when the hard edges are worn off and the new principles have been shaped by the people to meet their requirements. Then sometimes there are generations of gracious living such as during the Han and T'ang dynasties. Now once again China is being reborn. But never has the birth been so difficult. Pillaged by war-lords and exploited by foreign powers, the past few generations have known only privation and misery; many generations must pass in suffering and hardship before peace and prosperity are achieved. It is these people who by their simple courage and fortitude, their passive resistance against the enemy and nature, make the rebirth of China possible. Born into an era of chaos and poverty, and hardened by continual struggles against many odds, they were well fitted to meet the Japanese

onslaught in China.

As I looked at my fellow prisoners, I began to realise that these were the people, rather than the armies of China, who would in the end triumph over the Japanese. Each one of us in this cell, in this prison (if we got out alive), would be fired with undying hatred of the Japanese. We were but a few. But thousands of others were suffering daily throughout China at the hands of the Japanese Military Police, in prisons and in concentration camps. Only two types of people emerge from these hells : those whose spirits have been completely crushed, often mental or physical wrecks, and those who emerge tempered as fine steel and unwavering in their determination to seek revenge.

Two days after the New Year we had an addition to our cell. He was a rather shifty-looking individual and he was placed between Wang and the old farmer. It was not long before he started to converse with both of them. After medical inspection the following morning, word got round that he was a "plant" and spent his time going from cell to cell spying on the occupants in the hope that he would pick up something of use to the Japanese. This was borne out in the afternoon when the warder, with no particular reason, moved him across to the other row. Nobody took any notice of him and the following day he was called out after tiffin and we did not have him back with us again.

The weather continued to be bitterly cold but I was getting used to it; my feet seemed to have hardened and I was less bothered by chilblains. We seldom got out in the yard for exercise these days; the last time there had just been a six-inch fall of snow and we had been called out to shovel it away and clean up the courtyard, and were later jogged round in single file for a few minutes Although panting with the unaccustomed exertion, it was good to feel one's whole body alive and glowing with warmth. The food continued to be appalling. For the past few days we had each been given one salted sprat, about the length of one's little finger. Fortunately it could be eaten from head to tail, as the bones were soft. It added a little flavour to the few mouthfuls of tasteless gruel. Days passed. I seemed to have been forgotten. The fat merchant was taken away, as those who had received their sentences were confined in another prison. Often the days of waiting for trial outnumbered the actual sentences. Some of the prisoners had already been awaiting trial for over a year. Although I had been there for only five weeks, it seemed like five years. In these conditions one cannot help but become depressed, one's past life is as another world, and one clutches at straws of human comradeship amongst one's fellow prisoners. A friendly smile, a joke, the sharing of one's last piece of toilet paper, a kindly word of encouragement here and there, a dirty story or the criticism of some particular individual's private parts, exposed to all during the performing of one's daily functions, the continual search for vermin: these were all one had.

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January 1940 to February 1942

CHAPTER IV

COURT-MARTIAL AND RELEASE

Six weeks had already gone by and I had not heard any word of Kageyama for nearly three weeks. Why no news from Mizuno? Something must have gone wrong. I had long since lost any interest in the rounds of the warder, and the jingle of his keys no longer raised my hopes. One morning, intent on the prophecies of the Book of Ezekiel, I hardly believed my ears when I heard the warder shout "Number 98", as he opened the cell door. Once again I was back in the sergeant's office and glad to see Kageyama there. "I have some news for you. Kamii has arrived and negotiations are under way for your trial, which will probably take place in a couple of days. I naturally am to be interpreter. With any luck now, you might be out of this place in a few days." (Kamii was another of our Japanese advisers. 11e was a funny little man, bred in the school of diplomacy, and a former member of Japan's delegation to the League of Nations at Geneva.) The sergeant started to speak. He seemed puffed up with his own importance and was intent upon driving home some particular point, frequently tapping the table with his pencil, and at the same time indicating a document lying on his desk. When he had finished, Kageyama took up the paper.

"This," he said, "is a document that it is necessary for you to sign before the trial. It is a statement to the effect that you have had a fair and equitable trial under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Japanese Army and that you are completely satisfied with the judgment handed down by the court. This may appear to you to be a somewhat unusual procedure, but this is an unusual case. I have known it to be done before, particularly when they are in some doubt as to the legality of their case and settlement is a matter of negotiation. You had better sign it, as you are in no position to refuse, and whatever you feel about the trial, there is nothing that you can do about it."

"No, nothing, except refuse to sign it. If I sign this, then they are completely covered. I may be kept here for months, perhaps years. I have no guarantee what the verdict will be. If there are any enquiries through diplomatic channels, I see no reason to assist them in getting out of their own troubles. No, I see no good reason for signing this paper."

Kageyama became annoyed. "Aren't you ever going to realise that you are a defeated enemy? What right have you to buck the Japanese Army? What good is it going to do you? I do my best to help you, but what is the use when you are so stubborn? If you want to get out of this place, sign." By now the sergeant had evidently gathered the trend of the conversation and snatching the paper from Kageyama's hand put it down on the desk in front of me with his pen and, thumping the desk with his fist, shouted something which obviously meant "Sign ! Sign, you bastard!

"No, Kageyama, I'm damned if I will. I am sure there is something crooked about it, and in any case, if they are the conquerors, what the hell have they got to worry about? By now I was beginning to feel that if it went on much longer, my desire to snatch up the paper and tear it into shreds would get the better of me, and I began to wish for the quiet of my cell rather than this bedlam. The sergeant was now standing at his desk, jabbering and striking it with both fists. Fortunately Kageyama prevented the situation from developing any further by telling the two guards to take me away, and, deciding there were worse places than my cell, I lost no time in getting out. Back "home" once more, I had ample time to meditate on the situation. Between the warder's patrols, I told the story to Wang. He had no advice to offer except to contribute a few round oaths directed at certain organs belonging to the sergeant's mother and grandmother. By the end of the day I had begun to regret that I had not taken Kageyama's advice and signed. I was in the position where it didn't make much difference and my object was to get out of this place. I began to fear that my action might have unpleasant repercussions. If they were intent upon having this document signed, then next time they would probably use a little persuasion of one sort or another. Long after the others were snoring, I was turning the problem over and over in my mind, and finally fell asleep without coming to any particular conclusion.

During the course of the following morning I was called in again. I had now decided that if they 'a anted me to sign, I would do so. Kageyama offered me a smoke. "I had a long talk with Kamii last night you know both of us have been working hard to get you out of this mess. It has been agreed that the court-martial will be held during the next day or two. The Military have insisted that you sign this document but it has now been agreed that you will do so immediately after the trial." I agreed and Kageyama passed the information on to the sergeant, who seemed somewhat relieved. "O.K. That's all for the time being. General Okata is away at the moment, but as soon as he comes back, the trial will take place."

It was hard to realise that perhaps within four or five days I might be out of this place. When I passed on the news to the others, they all seemed to be pleased.

Perhaps some of them would be there for months yet, others might never get out, but the fact that one vas leaving gave hope to the others. After all, I was a foreigner; they seemed to think it natural that I should get out. In their eyes I still had some prestige as such. They were quite convinced that the dwarf islanders would not dare to be too drastic in their treatment of a British or American citizen! The anticipation of release made it practically impossible to eat the rotten mush that was thrown at us three times a day. I tried to cat the noon meal, could not stomach it and passed it to Wang. In the evening I gave my portion to the old man, w ho passed it on to his nephew. By the morning my excitement had worn off and I was famished. Nothing happened that day and I ate the three meals with considerable appreciation.

I spent a lot of time in considering what I should do when released. Food was my first interest: eggs and bacon for breakfast, steak for tiffin. . . . I should be able to wash my hair, I would have my beard clipped off and have a shave, a bath, clean clothes . . . get between clean white sheets!

Soon after ten the next morning I was called out. This then was to be the day!

"'Morning," said Kageyama. "We are due to go on at ten -thirty. I do not think there will be any complications. I am to act as your interpreter. It has been decided that a heavy fine will be imposed and that you will receive a suspended sentence of two years' solitary confinement. When the amount of the fine is announced and you are able to complete arrangements for payment, you will be released."

Lieutenant Nakamura, who was present, then spoke: " Today I shall be one of the judges and you will be able to witness and benefit personally by the impartial administration of justice as executed by the Imperial Japanese Army. There can be no appeal and the judgment will be final, but you can be sure it will be fair." It looked as if Kageyama had been speaking out of turn, so I assured the Lieutenant that I felt confident the case would be handled with complete fairness. He then went on to talk of the plans for the liberation of the Asiatic peoples from the pressure of British and American exploitation.

"Well, we ought to be going," said Kageyama," but first let me look you over. You do not look very clean. Button up your jacket and remember that you must stand rigidly to attention throughout the trial. O.K. Let's go!

I followed him through several courtyards and finally into a large building that appeared to be either a lecture hall or a schoolroom. There were rows of benches on either side of a central aisle facing a dais on which was a large desk, flanked by two smaller ones; a Japanese flag was draped over the front of the former. There was no one in the room and we walked to the stove in front of the dais and stood warming our hands. In a little while a side-door opened and a Japanese clerk shuffled in, carrying a sheaf of paper and brush pens which he distributed amongst the desks. He then sat down at a desk on the floor level and busied himself preparing pen and papers. According to Kageyama, he was the official recorder of the court. At a quarter to eleven the side-door opened again and Kageyama told me to stand to attention as he and the recorder fixed themselves in a position of rigidity. A party of five officers in single file marched in. They were in full military dress with the usual long sword dangling from their waists. Mounting the dais, they took their respective seats. Kageyama told me to bow; this was of course ignored.

The General, a man in his early fifties, wore rimless glasses and had a very impressive bushy black moustache, trimmed after the old German military style with upturned ends. On his left sat Lieutenant Nakamura, and on his right a short clean-shaven and plump little man, bald except for a fringe just above his ears; in his native costume he might well have passed for the good host and proprietor of a geisha house. At either end of the dais sat a young officer. Lieu-tenant Nakamura opened a dispatch-case and taking out some papers, placed them in front of the General and at the same time held a whispered conversation with him. The General, after the usual identification questions, proceeded to read from the papers on his desk. Soon he had finished and Kageyama translated: " He says that you are charged with the violation of the currency laws, promulgated by the Autonomous Government of the Mengchiang Republic, with intent to depreciate the currency of the State, which is punishable under military law. You have been brought before the court today to be tried and punished in accordance with the law as administered by His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Army. It is understood that you plead guilty of this crime."

"You must, of course, say ` guilty '," said Kageyama.

"Guilty," I replied, which, translated by Kageyama, brought a nod from the General, who again proceeded to read aloud from the papers. It proved to be a statement on the instances of my crimes and he ended with a request that I acknowledge these as being correct. This I did, and he replied that in this case there was no need to go any further with the proceedings and, turning to the small rotund gentle-man on his left, asked him a question, to which he shook his head. He then turned to Nakamura, who exchanged a few words with him, and leaning over his desk he nodded to the Lieutenant at the end of the row on his left, who also shook his head. Finally he turned to the sour-faced Lieutenant on his right, who immediately got up, bowed to the General and, sitting down again, addressed a question to me: " How long have you been in China ?

"Ten years," I replied.

"Then you have been in China long enough to appreciate Japan's special position in the Far East, especially in China. Therefore you are guilty of deliberately undermining the confidence of the Chinese people in the Japanese economic structure. This under the existing conditions of war is a capital offence."

" What am I supposed to reply to that? " I asked Kageyama." I think you had better tell him that I am a business man and am concerned only with business."

"He wants to know whether you recognise Japan's sovereign rights in Manchuria.?" By now I realised that I had run into one of the young militarists who seemed determined to throw sand in the works. At this juncture the General leaned over and whispered something to Nakamura, who passed it on to my inquisitor.

"Tell him that it makes no difference what I personally think about Japan's interests in Manchuria. This is a question of Governmental Foreign Policy."

Unfortunately this seemed to annoy him, as he sprang up from his chair and addressed the General in rather an uncontrolled way. The General, who was now clearly bored with the proceedings, looked decidedly annoyed. Things were not going as planned. He stood up, issued a word of command and marched off the dais, followed, rather hesitatingly at first, by the other four.

As the door shut Kageyama turned to me with a worried expression. "I shouldn't have translated your last reply. He told the General that you are a person of dangerous thoughts and as such he has demanded that you be detained until the end of the war. Christ knows what will happen now; the General has adjourned the court." I was feeling sufficiently roused now not to care very much. It was quite clear that he was unaware that the case had already been decided and that the trial was merely a face-saving device. If he persisted, then there might well be some unexpected turn of events. Fifteen minutes dragged into half an hour. I began to consider the prospects of imprisonment for the duration. With the summer would come cholera, dysentery, typhoid, and with no medical attention half the prisoners would die. I began to realise that my life might depend on the successful conclusion of this morning's performance. Kageyama walked over to the recorder, who was leaning back in his chair with his feet on the desk and his eyes closed; he had a few words with him and then left the room. An hour and five minutes had already passed since the court had adjourned. There must have been some difficulties in connection with the Lieutenant who had interfered; it must he serious, otherwise they would have by now returned. Kageyama had been away twenty minutes; what could have happened to him? I paced up and down, wet with perspiration and my mind full of ugly possibilities. At last he returned. "They are just finishing their lunch and will he back shortly." In a few moments, led by the General, the party returned. As they took their places, I was again instructed to bow. The General removed his glasses and, looking directly at me, commenced to speak. As he finished Kageyama translated :" The General says that after due consideration it has been decided to levy punishment in the form of a fine in the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand Mengchiang dollars and a term of two years' solitary confinement, which will be suspended. Upon payment of the fine you will be released, but in order to keep a check on your future activities, it will be necessary for you to report to the Military Police once every week. There is nothing further. Bow to the General." As I bowed, the General pushed back his chair and led the way out of the hall, followed by the other four and the recorder.

As the door closed I turned to Kageyama and, shaking his hand, thanked him for his help. "Well, you can consider this incident in your life as just about over. I'll try to get in touch with Kamii and have him come down to see you and arrange for the details of the payment. As soon as that is settled you can leave. In the meantime you will have to return to your cell."

Soon I was again sitting facing the wall and the recipient of whispered congratulations. I would probably never see any of these people again who in the past two months had become part of my life. They were good honest people, generous with their friendship at a time when human companionship meant so much. Within a couple of hours or so I was called, and as I opened the office door I heard Kamii's excitable voice. As soon as he saw me he rushed over and grabbed my hand, tears streaming down his face. "Ah My dear Tipton, are you all right? What a terrible time! Never mind, it is over. You must come back to Peking — there is room for you in the mess there. Ah! Your beard, we must shave. Your hair, we must cut. And food, you are hungry? ",

He had had the foresight to bring a cheque-book with him. The amount of the fine had apparently been governed by our bank balance, and there was just enough to cover the fine, which was the equivalent of U.S. 525,000. I signed, and in the meantime Kamii went off to negotiate the cheque. He was soon back with the news that the funds could not be obtained until the following day. They refused me permission to leave until they had received payment, but that night I was taken to a small room with a brick bed and a stove, and two thick cotton quilts. For the first time in two months j was warm and stayed warm. By the next morning everything was arranged and Kamii suggested that I should sleep during the afternoon and he would take me to his hotel later in the evening; we would have dinner, steak and fried eggs.

I realised he did not wish to be embarrassed by my presence in the hotel during daylight hours. I did not blame him particularly, as I was an extremely dirty-looking individual, so I agreed only on the promise that

we would not eat western-style food. Having lived in Kalgan and knowing what would be produced under the label "western food", I wanted to wait until I got to Peking to enjoy such delicacies.

After dark Kamii appeared, accompanied by a Chinese with my clothes. I stripped off my khaki outer shirt and pants, retaining my lice-ridden underclothing, feeling much the same way about my cleanliness as I did about the food: no half measures. When I reached Peking I would burn my clothes, de-louse, shave, bath and then tackle the food problem. We left by the midnight express, accompanied by a member of the Military Police who was to hand me over to his opposite number in Peking. We arrived the next morning at half-past seven. "We had better go and see my friend Suzuki, he will take you over from this man and then that will be all. I'll phone the mess and let them know you have arrived." At the Military Police Headquarters we were ushered into the usual reception-room, furnished with two plush arm-chairs, a plush-covered sofa, a table covered with a plush cloth, and the usual ornate cigarette -box and ash-trays. We had hardly sat down before a young Japanese with long hair and horn-rimmed glasses appeared, greeted Kamii, and then turned to me. "I am Suzuki, Japanese Special Police. You friend my good friend Mr. Kamii? Any trouble you come me I fix." In a few moments we left for the Wagons-Lits Hotel, where a room had been booked for me to " w ash the insects away ", as Kamii said, before going over to the mess. Suzuki walked down the corridor with us. “you dance?" he said, addressing me. "You I go dance one night. Plenty whisky, plenty girls." I began to wonder what sort of a war this as I was just finishing my bath when Billy Christian arrived to take me up to the mess, and a few moments later my boy appeared with a bottle of "White Horse ". Life was rapidly getting back to normal.

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February 1942 to June 1944

CHAPTER I
PAROLE IN PEKING

War at this early stage had brought little change to Peking. The Japanese, hastily donning their laurel wreaths, and not yet decided upon the correct angle at which they should be worn, had made few changes. After the initial excitement had died down, the private lives of the British and American community were little disturbed. Banks and business houses had been temporarily closed and were later taken over, but the majority of the people had managed to remain in their own homes and enjoyed complete freedom within the city.

The Committee of the Peking International Club, pre-dominantly British, resigned and was replaced by an Axis Committee, but the "enemy aliens", as we were dubbed, continued to enjoy the privileges of the Club. Sunday morning would find the glassed-in verandah packed with members ; on one side a table occupied by Germans, on another a Japanese banker and his family, and nearby a party of British and Americans. There were Russians, French and Italians, not to mention what was known as the "rocking-chair fleet", composed of that hardy perennial, the American service widow in the Far East, of which Peking was never without its quota. Life for the "enemy aliens" continued on a fairly normal scale. Money was short but somehow there were still parties; vodka took the place of gin; Chinese cooks economised and served three courses instead of five ; rickshaws and bicycles took the place of cars. Occasionally someone's house would be occupied by the Japanese, which necessitated some reshuffling

But gradually people felt the pinch and funds began to run low. A Relief Committee was formed and funds were made available by the British and American Governments through the office of the Swiss Representative, who had been appointed to look after their interests. The Committee soon became the Lord High Executioners, sitting in judgment on the private lives of the community. Theirs was the prerogative to grant or withhold relief. Those who had no alternative went on the dole and their mode of living became just another topic of conversation for the "rocking-chair fleet" — there was Fifi, for instance, on the dole and feeding six Pekinese dogs; Mrs. Z--- who was suspected of secret drinking; and Mrs. X— who was selling her gold dollar cheques to the French Bank and indulging her penchant for antique watches. Well, why not? It was merely a loan from the government! Others took it more seriously, sold their silver, curios, fur coats, and even took in paying guests before they went on relief. As time went on life reached an even keel and pay-day at the Wagons-Lits Hotel saw dowagers and dope addicts, missionaries and alcoholics elbowing their way in the queue to the pay-desk and the scrutinising eye of Billy Christian, who was Chairman of the Committee. Completely in his element, he got the " low-down " on them all ; gave close personal attention to the special cases, such as the Russian wives of the American service men who had been interned in Shanghai, and of course G--, who was always anxious to redeem a portion of her loan. Over all this presided the benevolent Dr. Hoeppli who, guided by Billy and Neville McBain, ministered to the personal problems of the British and American community? By profession an enthusiastic bacteriologist and formerly with the Peking Union Medical College, he found some difficulty in reorientating his outlook to deal with the prevailing specimens.

In the early summer H—, manager of one of the American banks, disappeared; he was well into the Western Hills before he was missed. This caused no little consternation between the Japanese Embassy and the Secret Police, who each considered the other responsible for allowing H— to get away. No less indignant were certain members of the British and American community, who felt that their personal liberty, the existing even tenor of their lives, might be considerably ruffled. The "rocking -chair fleet» cleared decks for action: "How utterly selfish . . .", ”My dear, he only did it because . . .", "But imagine, the leading American banker with so little sense of responsibility to the community". These people and others seemed to have forgotten that they had ignored the repeated warnings of their Consuls to leave China, and deserved little consideration from those who had stayed at the request of their various business organisations.

The Committee worked hard with the Japanese, and it was eventually decided that "enemy aliens" must wear red arm-bands bearing Chinese characters symbolising their respective nationalities. They also insisted that there be a system of guarantee against further similar escapades, and the community was divided into groups in accordance with residential districts, and each district again divided into sections of ten individuals. In each group one person was held responsible for the proper conduct of the remaining nine. This was a relic of the "Pao Chia", or "Home Protection", system introduced during the early part of the Sung dynasty by one of the then Secretaries of State. Instigated for the purpose of tightening the control of the people in an effort to increase revenue collections, it was revived and much used by the Japanese during their occupation of China in an attempt to control and prevent the anti-Japanese activities of the Chinese.

Within a few weeks life had settled down again.

Although arm-bands restricted one's activities, they were at the same time a badge of respect amongst the Chinese. Sometimes the shops would give one special 'special prices, occasionally a rickshaw man would refuse to take his fare, in restaurants one would be greeted with the thumbs-up sign by the waiters. People attached to the bigger institutions such as the oil companies, the banks, or the tobacco company, were better off than those of the smaller firms. These larger concerns were taken over by the Japanese immediately, and some of the staff retained for the purpose of being available to answer queries when necessary. In some cases, as in that of our Company, we were forced to take part in the actual running of our business for several months. We received a monthly salary of five hundred local dollars, which just kept us off relief. But in a few months we had gradually faded out of the picture, except for Billy Christian, who was called upon every now and again to untangle the reins, or to give advice, upon which our Japanese successors seldom acted.

By midsummer, life had again returned to a pleasing tempo; we were still free to move about the city. At the Club there was tennis and swimming, a drink and perhaps a light lunch under the striped sun-umbrellas round the open-air swimming-pool. In the evenings a walk in the park, dinner and bridge at a friend's house. Helen Burton of the "Camel Bell", so well known to globe-trotters for her exquisite" things Chinese " and her unbounded hospitality, often had breakfast parties on the "Pei Hai", or Northern Sea Lake, where one could embark in a punt and drift amongst water-lilies still studded with sparkling morning dew. Here, in the heart of Peking, was another world where time lingered, reluctant to leave the willow-fringed lake and the pine-covered hills, the pagodas and palaces and the elaborate tea pavilions, suave in the knowledge of their perfection from centuries of contemplation in the mirror of the lake : a world of picture gardens, of Emperors and Empresses ; the State barge drifting over the lake ; the music of lutes ; the court ladies in their flowing robes of soft pastel shades, in pleasing contrast to the crude and brilliant colours of the ornate pavilions ; the extravagant theatrical performances that took place in the open-air theatre. Sometimes we would climb the Hill of the White Dagoba and breakfast with the whole of Peking spread before us; the lakes of the Southern Sea, the Middle Sea and the Northern Sea ; to the south-east the golden-tiled roofs of the Forbidden City nestling amongst the green tree-tops, and, far to the south, the three-tiered azure roof of the Temple of Heaven.

As the summer passed the Japanese relaxed; there had been no more escapes from Peking to the west, and the war was going well from their point of view. So, occasionally, we were able to obtain special passes to visit the Western Hills some twenty miles north-west of Peking, or the Imperial Hunting Park, the Temple of the Black Dragon Pool or the Summer Palace, and Sundays would he spent in walking over the hills, visiting temples and having picnic lunches.

The price for these delightful excursions, and for that matter practically any other social activity outside one's home, was the probability and doubtful pleasure of Suzuki's company. During the past half-year he had been studying English and had made some progress. Sometimes he would turn up at our mess and insist on taking one or two of us out to a cabaret. We would plead lack of funds. "No matter! Suzuki got plenty money." We would suggest that there might be trouble for a red arm-hand wearer seen at a dance hall. "No matter! Suzuki got gun." Giving up the struggle, one of us would go with him. Drinking whisky, beer and vodka, we would go from one dive to another. Usually it ended by our having to pay for the dance tickets and the drinks, but the evening was often quite young when Suzuki, the worse for the mixture of liquor, would gradually lose his enthusiasm, slump in his chair and drop off to sleep. At this point one crept out, hoping to get a rickshaw before he woke up.

One evening Billy Christian and our stenographer (who, incidentally, was at the time teaching Suzuki English) were having a quiet dinner in an inconspicuous corner of the Peking Hotel roof-garden when Suzuki happened to see them. Early as it was, he had already reached the stage of universal love. "Ah! Christian-san, so happy, so happy. We must drink. You, I, my teacher. Boy -san!" Drinks were ordered and repeated. Earl West's band was re-hashing an old number. "Suzuki too drunk dance. Christian-san, you must dance with my teacher." Billy explained that he could not dance with his red arm-band on, but Suzuki, intent on everyone having a good time, insisted, and finally producing his pistol, forced the issue. "If you no dance, Suzuki shoot you." Reluctant to ruin his sharkskin dinner-jacket, Billy had a most enjoyable evening. By the time the dance finished Suzuki had departed to spread a little sunshine elsewhere.

From time to time there had been rumours of repatriation and of concentration camps. Early in the spring the Americans had packed and were on the point of leaving, when word came that the ship had been postponed. A month, two months, and it was forgotten. In August a few British left for Shanghai to join a repatriation ship, but that was as far as many of them got and, unable to return to Peking, they had to live under much less pleasant conditions in Shanghai. In the middle of winter a Dutchman and a Frenchman disappeared from Peking, but there was little said about it by the Japanese, and there were no repercussions. Other people were thinking about escape, and here and there it would be the subject of idle talk. After the New Year, the rumours of internment became more frequent and convincing. Enemy aliens were already being concentrated in Shanghai. In Chefoo they had been confined to a mission compound and in Tsingtao they had already been concentrated for a year. This halcyon existence in Peking could not continue

in-definitely.

Christian and I had discussed the possibilities of getting away to West China, as almost everyone else had from time to time, but with the situation deteriorating as it was, we decided that it was time to make plans. We felt confident that if we could make the right connection with the Communists who were, even at that time, surrounding Peking, there would be little difficulty in getting away. There were certain foreigners in Peking who, amongst the few, were known to have such connections and we approached a friend in one of the American missions. After some persuasion he agreed to introduce us to a certain Mr. Wang, a Communist agent living in the city with his wife, under cover of an embroidery business.

On the appointed evening the watchman had been told that we were expecting a seller of embroidery and to be sure to admit him. Soon after seven he arrived — a short, grey-haired little man, dressed in western clothes and carrying a bundle wrapped in blue cloth. While the servant was handing round Chinese tea and passing cigarettes, Mr. Wang untied his bundle and spread out a selection of beautiful embroidered table-linen for our inspection, and when the servant left the room we were haggling over prices in the approved manner.

As the door closed Wang turned to us and said he had little time and suggested that we got down to business. We told him that the concentration of the British and Americans was almost a certainty in a matter of weeks. We wished to contact the Chinese troops in the vicinity of Peking, and, with their assistance, make our way overland to West China. Would he put us in touch with the right people? He spoke briefly and to the point, and told us that primarily they were interested in getting in touch with foreigners who would remain in their area and assist them in their war effort against the Japanese. They needed engineers, electricians, doctors and teachers, but, of course, we were all allies and naturally they would do what they could to help us. He promised to get in touch with their Foreign Relations section to see what could be done, and arranged to send a man to see us within three days.

Christian and I were not the only people interested in making plans for escape ; we were fortunate in interesting an American doctor, formerly attached to the Peking Union Medical College ; a very well-known professor from Yenching University, who was already acquainted with the Reds, and had previously received an invitation to assist them in their educational work ; Arthur Hummel, a young American attached to the Fu Jen Catholic University as an English teacher, and another young teacher from Yenching University, These additions made rather a large party, but both Christian and I felt that the Communists would not be particularly interested to go out of their way to help a couple of capitalistic business men alone.

On the second day after Mr. Wang's visit, I received a telephone call to say that a Mr. Yu would like to call at seven on the following evening. At the appointed time he arrived. Tall for a Chinese and aged about thirty, he spoke quite good English. Once again while the boy was passing tea and cigarettes we talked of business, the weather and other trivial matters. The boy then left and Mr. Yu, in a manner which undoubtedly would have qualified him for the secret service, got up and, tiptoeing to the door, opened it to see that no one was outside listening; he then opened the windows leading to the verandah and, finally convinced there were no eavesdroppers, got down to business.

He told us that the matter of our escape had been mentioned to the various responsible parties, who agreed that plans should be made to assist our group, and he had been put in charge of arrangements within the city. He had had experience and had been directly responsible for H—'s get-away, a perfectly executed escape, and although the party involved on this occasion was large and conditions more difficult, he felt sure that it could be arranged successfully. There was a good deal of melodramatic talk involving motor-cars, signals and a secret rendezvous. We discussed the various members of the party and went to considerable lengths to convince him of each person's particular ability. He was already acquainted with the Yenching professor and was particularly interested in the doctor, whom we considered to be our star drawing card. The conversation then turned to the possibility of obtaining medical supplies and ANT promised to get together a selection of sulpha-drugs and other items of which they were particularly in need. It was agreed that we should have the medicine, together with any items of personal clothing and toilet articles that we might require, ready within a couple of days, and he in turn would arrange to have them smuggled out of the city to the Western Hills. From there they would be forwarded to an advanced base where we would be able to pick there up.

The next two days were spent in making the necessary preparations. We estimated that it would take us from six to eight weeks to reach Sian in the province of Shensi, from where we could fly to Chungking, depending, of course, upon what Japanese activities we met en route. We would have to walk practically all the way, so prepared strong shoes and thick woollen socks, jodhpurs and khaki shirts, woollen sweaters, a raincoat and toilet articles. We each made a donation to the doctor to purchase what medicine he could not otherwise lay his hands on. In no time we had filled a good-sized canvas grip.

Mr. Yu's next visit was a short one. He told us that arrangements were being made for a detachment to meet us in the hills and to escort us to the Communist advance head-quarters, but they had not yet been completed.

Stressing that the concentration announcement was imminent and we would have to leave within a week, I arranged to deliver our personal effects to him the following evening. He told us of a certain street corner where, at a given time, lie would be riding past on a bicycle and be followed by an empty rickshaw, which I was to call and place the baggage in.

The appointed time found me walking down the street followed by the rickshaw. As I stopped to light a cigarette I noticed a bicycle followed by a rickshaw approaching, so I immediately started an argument with my boy and, roundly cursing him, signalled to the one following the bicycle and transferred my baggage. I followed it down the street for a hundred yards or so and, at a convenient turning, slipped up a narrow- lane and went home.

Within a few days the Japanese announced that all enemy aliens would, for their own protection, be transported to the Civilian Assembly Centre at Weihsien, a small provincial town in the middle of Shantung province. The Americans would be the first party to leave on the 14th of March, followed by the British on the 29th. This announcement brought consternation to all. Many had realised that sooner or later it was inevitable, others had scoffed at the idea, pointing to the freedom of Japanese citizens in England and America, but for all there followed a frantic ten days.

What should one take? The Japanese Embassy issued a prospectus which read more like the advertisement for a summer camp than for an internment centre. We learned that there would be ample food provided, fresh vegetables and fruit in season, including strawberries; there was a dairy and milk would be supplied to the children, nursing mothers and the aged. Accommodation was spacious, but we were advised to take bed and bedding and eating utensils. Small supplies of additional food could also be taken. Recreation facilities were provided and one should take tennis rackets, balls, etc. There would be conducted walks in the country and to the town for shopping, but a canteen would also be established within the Assembly Centre at which purchases of daily necessities could be made. Cameras and radio sets were prohibited. One gramophone could be taken for every twenty guests. Fortunately for the peace of the camp, most of the gramophones had already been sold. One bottle of alcohol could be taken for medicinal purposes only.

This did not fool the Committee, who passed around a list of suggested articles that should be taken. They included mosquito nets, tin plates and mugs in preference to porcelain, tin jerries, carpentering tools, wire, nails and screws, cooking utensils, books, writing paper and typewriters, medical supplies, toys for the children, warm clothing and footwear, soap, and if there was any room left in one's regulation two trunks and bedding crate, then fill up with food. Everyone went on a wild orgy of purchasing, the favourite market-place being the second-hand stalls near the Temple of Heaven.

To all this excitement and speculation as to what would be the most useful articles to take, we, who expected to leave for the Western Hills any day, had to show the interest and reaction expected, but although we had to make some pre-text of preparing for the camp, we did as little as possible. Christian, as Chairman of the Committee, had become so involved in the business of the coming internment that he decided he could not now very well escape, and after some deliberation, reluctantly gave up the idea. With the issuing of the concentration order, all passes were suspended, extra guards patrolled the city walls and additional sentries were placed at all the city gates.

A few days later we got in touch with Mr. Yu again. He admitted that the situation had changed to such an extent that it would be difficult to get us out of the city, but he was working on a plan and would communicate with us again. Four days passed and there was still no news. We were really beginning to lose hope, as only five days remained before the American party was due to leave. At last he promised to call at the mess in two days' time at nine in the morning. On the appointed day the others came over for breakfast ; by half-past nine he had not appeared ; ten o'clock, and still no sign of him ; at ten-thirty we decided to face the facts, and dispersed to make last-minute purchases and preparations for camp, which up to now we had been so confident of avoiding. We were all very depressed ; we discussed the possibility of climbing the city wall at night and making our way to the hills, but decided that without a reliable guide it would be too risky an undertaking for a party as large as ours.

The heavy baggage was collected; there were a few fare-well parties. The Japanese had ordered that all houses be left with furniture and fittings intact, but most people, with the aid of Chinese or neutral friends, were able to dispose of most of their cherished personal belongings, exchanging their beautiful antique Chinese furniture and rugs, and other household effects, for the cheapest and crudest that could be obtained. The houses of friends became packed to over-flowing with furniture, curios and books. By the time the Japanese were ready to check the inventories of the vacated houses, the Chinese servants had managed to get away with the few remaining items of value. The balance was auctioned at ridiculously cheap prices to the Japanese civilian residents of Peking

I spent the last evening prior to the Americans' departure in helping friends to make a few last-minute purchases, sitting on over-stuffed suitcases and tying a piece of string here, a rope there. Food had to be prepared for the journey; a thermos of coffee and a flask of brandy. While all this was going on, friends were coming in and out, wishing god speed, and usually leaving a farewell gift

of food or clothing. The suitcase would have to be opened and the gift squeezed in, sat upon and coerced into closing, more ropes and more string; drinks and a picnic meal on the floor. Last-minute preparations went on late into the night. The sole consolation people had was that most of their friends would be going with them.

Shortly after noon the next day the American party began to assemble with their hand luggage in the grounds of the American Embassy. As they arrived at the entrance in rickshaws, willing hands helped them with their baggage. Billy Christian was in charge of the whole party, which was divided into groups of about twenty, each under a "group captain". By two o'clock all had arrived and were waiting in their assigned groups for baggage inspection.

It was not long before the Military Police commenced to search the baggage and, picking on a poor old missionary in Christian's group, turned her suitcases upside-down and scattered the contents on the ground. Before they had reached Billy, they treated two others in a similar manner. When it came to his turn, he refused to open his bags and a hot argument ensued. Fortunately a secretary from the Japanese Embassy was nearby, to whom he protested, pointing out that the Committee had been told the arrangements were in the hands of the Consular Police. After no little pother, it was agreed that the Military Police should cease their activities, and the Consular Police completed the job in a very cursory manner. At three o'clock the groups were given the signal to get into line, two abreast, and be ready to march off to the station, each person carrying his own baggage.

The Chief of the Consular Police preceded the party, which was headed by Billy, a knapsack on his back and a grip in each hand. He was followed by a group of men and women, old and young, from all walks of life, laden with knapsacks, suitcases, grips, thermos bottles slung over their shoulders, and packages of food tied to their suitcases. Many were old and the pace had to be slow. One or two small children were carried; others clutched their mothers' skirts, and some held on to the suitcases. The route to the station, which was about half a mile, was lined with friends, and with the curious. Many of the British had come to bid farewell to their American friends and to see for themselves what they would have to go through within the next fortnight. There were Russians, French and Chinese, and as they passed the French hospital, the nuns, who were lined up on the pavement, waved and shouted encouragement.

After the first couple of hundred yards the party stopped for a rest already quite a few were feeling the strain. As they passed out of the Legation Quarter a Chinese rushed from the crowd and thrust a huge bunch of red roses into Billy's hands, a parting gift from one of his girl friends. This rather relieved the situation. The Consular Police immediately gave chase, but the Chinese disappeared into the crowd, and the party came to a stop. Japanese movie operators who had preceded the party continued to take shots. They would no doubt have to do a little editing after this episode! The procession had hardly started to move again before an elderly American fainted under the weight of his baggage; he was removed to the pavement and two policemen stood guard over him, while the rest of the party had to go on. A few more yards and a girl, showing signs of collapse, dropped her bags. One or two of us who had been following, rushed to help her, and to carry her bags. The police objected and attempted to push us off, threatening with their swords, but by now the helping hands were too many for them to cope with and deciding that they had already lost enough face, they hurried the party off to the station. We were not allowed on the platform, but I managed to sneak through to see them off, packed like cattle in third-class coaches. Just before the train left, the passengers were told they would have to change trains at Tientsin and Tsinan. How easy it would have been to have given them a through train to Weihsien!

I still had ten days to find a way out before having to follow my American friends to Weihsien. The next few days were spent in an attempt to get in touch with either Mr. Wang or Mr. Yu, but with no success. It would have been easy to get over certain likely sections of the city wall, but I was stumped for any connections on the other side. The time passed quickly, four more days and we were due to leave. Someone suggested that I should call on a friend of his, a charming old French doctor. This I did. He was a delightful personality, approaching seventy, but brisk and full of energy. He was very popular amongst the Chinese and had a large practice. I explained the situation and he showed consider-able sympathy and understanding, and asked me to return at eleven the next day, when he introduced me to a tall, thin Chinese peasant. This man, he said, would be able to lead me to his summer bungalow in the Western Hills, which was on the border of the Communist district. Every week they visited his house and it was merely a matter of remaining hidden till they came. The question was, how to get out of the city? At night it was essential to have a guide, and the Chinese felt that he was not sufficiently familiar with the country in the immediate vicinity of Peking to undertake the task. There were only two more days left in which to complete arrangements, and the doctor asked me to come round again the following morning.

When I reached his house he told me that he had spent considerable time trying to think of a suitable plan, though it was difficult in the circumstances, especially with the pressing time factor, but he went on to explain that at about eleven that morning he would be leaving the city to visit the Carla Monastery. As he was a French citizen, his car was rarely searched. He would put me in the luggage carrier and lock it. The chauffeur would drop him at the Monastery and then drive on further into the country with the man whom I had met yesterday, and at

some quiet spot we could get out of the car and walk to the doctor's summer bungalow, where I would have to remain hidden until the next visit of the communists. He would be leaving in a couple of hours.

My immediate reaction was to accept, then I realised what a great risk this old man was taking for a mere acquaintance over a matter of such little importance. I decided it was hardly fair to ask him to do this. Then again, going out with-out any pre-arranged contacts was rather foolhardy, so I turned the plan down. That evening I had a telephone call from the doctor to congratulate me on our mutual escape. For the first time in months they had insisted upon searching the car at the city gate! After this I decided that I was fated to follow my friends into camp, so now I too had to take the question of packing seriously.

Having watched the Americans leave, some ingenious person had invented a kind of portable trolley. Simple and efficient, it consisted of two long sticks with a small wheel mounted at the apex and a couple of cross-bars that fitted into slots in the handles, keeping it firm and in a fixed position. Attached to the wood were two pieces of rope with which to tie on one's baggage. There was a tremendous demand for them and practically everybody bought one.

On the appointed day the British party assembled in the American Embassy compound. This time the Military Police were absent; there was not a very rigid search of the bag-gage, and much to the amazement of all, we were instructed to load our heavy hand-bags on to trucks. When we left, few had more than one suitcase and a knapsack to carry, and thus, lightly laden, we marched to the station without the attention of the movie cameramen and without any halts.

The train left at about half-past four. We changed at Tientsin and settled down again in the third-class carriage for the night. There was little possibility of comfortable sleep. We ate sandwiches, had a few drinks, and dozed. Some were so exhausted that they stretched out on the floor, amongst baggage and feet. At eight the next morning we arrived at Tsinan, where we again changed trains, glad of the opportunity to get out and stretch our legs. By half-past nine we started on the last lap of the journey. One of the travellers found out that a dining-car had been attached to the train and there was a wild rush. The first fifty arrivals or so got a bottle of beer each, with the surprisingly light casualty list of a couple of sprained ankles, three pairs of damaged spectacles, and one set of broken false teeth. At last we arrived at Weihsien station and were delighted to find some of our American friends on the platform to meet us.

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February 1942 to June 1944

CHAPTER II

CONCENTRATION CAMP

Outside the station four Japanese military trucks awaited us, and with knapsacks and small hand-baggage we climbed in; there were no seats and we had to stand. The road from the station led through the southern suburb, the streets of which were lined with curious Chinese. Reaching the south gate of the walled city of Weihsien, we turned to the east. The Japanese drivers seemed to take a delight in careering along at a terrific speed over the rough road, throwing us off our feet and bouncing us on the floor of the truck, amidst clouds of dust.

The camp, formerly a large American mission hospital and school, lay some two miles east of Weihsien. In the distance the red-tiled roofs of the campus buildings showed here and there between the trees, the whole surrounded by a high grey brick wall. Cheered by crowds, the trucks drew up before a porticoed entrance in the Chinese style, and above the large black folding doors was a legend in Chinese, reading, "**The Courtyard of the Happy Way**", the name by which the mission had been known. We were met by a friend from Peking whom we followed up the slope leading to a large open space alongside the church, later to be known as the "Athletic Field" ; here all lined up and were assigned to billets.

While these arrangements were being made, we had an opportunity to look over those who were so interested in our arrival. A motley crowd, most of them were unshaven and their clothes were already dirty and worn. Now and again one would recognise an old friend from Tientsin or some other North China town. Two weeks had made a big change in their appearance. Amongst the internees were a large number of Catholic priests, many with beards and whiskers of the most magnificent proportions and the most varied hues, the product of years of careful pruning and clipping ; some were dressed in black Chinese gowns and puffed long Chinese pipes. There were a number of children, some with their mothers, the latter looking tired and drawn.

We were fortunate in being allocated the last row of students' quarters, six small rooms ten by twelve feet,

GATEWAY TO THE COURTYARD OF THE HAPPY WAY-- WEIHSIEN CONCENTRATION CAMP

each of which was to accommodate three people. I arranged to share a room with Leslie Ramage of the Canton Union Insurance, and Arthur Porter of "Marco Polo", one of Peking's better-known Chinese art galleries. Having taken possession of our new home, bare with the exception of a crude wall-cupboard and a small table, we chalked our names on the door and set out to find what the next move was to be. This, we soon learned, was to locate our beds and bedding. Passing through a maze of alleys and rows of minute rooms, we came to a large open space in the middle of which was a mountain of crates, wooden boxes, trunks and bedding. Arthur was the first to find his bedding roll; Ram and I took more than an hour to locate ours. The rest of the evening was spent in carrying our own and other people's baggage, and by nine o'clock we were all very tired. After a supper consisting of left-overs from the train journey, and a bottle of vodka, we rolled up in a couple of blankets and turned in for the night on the floor.

Next morning we found that the residents of a week or ten days' standing had comparatively well-furnished "homes", so we too set about furnishing our small apartment.

EXTERIOR OF AN " APARTMENT "

The whole compound could be divided into three sections. The numerous alleys consisting of rows of students' rooms housed the married people, the women and a few of the more fortunate bachelors, and scattered amongst the students quarters were the class-rooms which had been turned into dormitories for the single men. On the east section of the compound was the hospital, surrounded by open ground on which had once been a tennis court and a basketball pitch. Divided by a wall from these two sections were seven or eight large western -style houses which in former days had been occupied by the mission faculty and were now housing the Japanese camp staff and guards. A few were unoccupied and it was from these that flowed the endless assortment of knickknacks which gave a homelike appearance to our bare cabins. Before lunch we had succeeded in scrounging two cupboards and a table, and by supper-time that night we were comparatively well-furnished, having found two wooden chairs, a kettle, an enamel boiler, a bucket and a fine selection of glass preserving jars. By the end of the first week we had put up the beds, and nailed a few shelves to the walls, but by the end of a month we had a double-decker sleeping-berth, which left room for a couple of chairs and a collapsible writing-desk. We spread a rug on the floor, hung curtains at the windows and built an outside cooking stove against the next row of tenements.

The camp was in an appalling state: many of the buildings, including the hospital, were littered with filth to a depth of several feet; sanitary arrangements had not been completed ; there was rubbish everywhere. No preparations had been made for the first arrivals, a group of British and Americans from Tsingtao. The American party from Peking had arrived before their beds and bedding, and had spent the first two nights on the floor with nothing more, for the most part, than overcoats and one blanket each. It had snowed and had rained, and the compound became a perfect quagmire. Hot water was scarce and food supplies negligible, the most unappetising mess being served twice a day, under the alias of “stew", by the Tsingtao pioneers. There were three centres for the preparation of food, known as the Tsingtao, Tientsin and Peking kitchens. By the time the Peking British arrived the Americans had brought some semblance of order to the Peking kitchen.

Within a few weeks the camp began to organise itself, and committees were formed which took the responsibility of seeing that the necessary jobs were done. Soon life had settled down to a well-organised routine.

The Japanese supplied coal and wood for cooking, flour from which we made our own bread, vegetables of the cheaper sort (such as carrots, turnips, sweet potatoes, cabbage and leeks), meat and sometimes fish, usually squids or an assortment of small odds and ends, hardly worth the trouble it gave the fish-squad to clean them, and salt, pepper, soya-bean sauce and oils for cooking. Occasionally we received a ration of sugar and eggs. Everything in the camp was done by the internees themselves, and the greater part of the work was concerned with the feeding of the 1800 people. Coal had to be brought from the coal dump, wood carried and chopped, meat washed and minced or cut into cubes,

". . . ADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED ", ASSURES THE JAPANESE CONSUL-GENERAL IN PEKING

INTERIOR OF AN " APARTMENT "

vegetables washed, peeled and cut up, and supplies carried from the store-house to the kitchens. Relays of stokers were required to keep the huge cauldrons boiling, also dish-washers and cauldron-cleaners, cooks, assistant cooks and their helpers.

For the first few weeks it was exhausting work but one gradually got used to it. I first worked in the Peking kitchen as general help and then graduated to the butchery, where the maggot-ridden carcases and the myriads of flies which laid eggs on the meat faster than one could wipe them off were rather more than I could stomach, and I went back to the kitchen as a helper on Father J—'s cooking team. Remaining in the kitchen for the rest of the time, I gradually worked my way up from helper to chief cook. Arthur Porter cooked in the winter and worked in the community garden in the summer, and Ram divided his time between the kitchen and the camp canteen, and so, by skilful planning and a little scrounging, we contrived between us to look after our own interests with considerable success.

As the summer approached, people relaxed, realising that they would in all probability he interned for some time to come. Camp work was put on to a regular basis, the majority of the men doing one twelve-hour day on their assigned duty and two days off. Amongst the Catholic Fathers, the educationalists from the Peking universities and the language students, we had some of the finest intellects in North China, and lectures and talks were given on every imaginable subject. A children's school was organised; a Dramatic Society had been formed and had produced some very creditable shows; concerts were arranged and pianoforte recitals were given by Curtis Grimes or Shireen Talati, equal to anything of that nature one could hear in the Far East. The various religious denominations worked out their arrangements for church services. A baseball league was started with matches played almost every evening.

Camp politics were soon well under way. Elections were held and committees formed, but the predominating figures continued to be Billy Christian and Ted McLaren of Butterfield and Swire. It was a thankless task, and members of the Committee soon became targets of much criticism. Their decisions were questioned; they were accused of favouritism; blamed for the shortage of food, denounced for not taking a strong enough line against the Japanese; seldom was their work appreciated by the internees.

The average internee saw little of the Japanese Camp Commandant or his staff, who left the running of the camp almost entirely in the hands of the Committee, to whom he issued orders and from whom he received requests and complaints. An office building was shared by the Committee and the Commandant and his staff.

Secretary to the Committee was the efficient Shell Oil Company's Ethel Blake. Smooth, efficient and never flurried, she did a great job. To her much credit is due for the way in which she kept Egger, the Swiss Consul from Tsingtao (who was in charge of Allied interests), posted on matters concerning the welfare of the internees. Egger paid visits to the camp almost every fortnight during the first few months, but as time went on the intervals between his visits became longer. The Japanese, always suspicious, rarely gave him the opportunity of seeing a member of the Committee alone, much less an internee. In order to keep him informed, reports on the camp and any special requests were prepared in advance of Egger's visits. Upon his arrival a Japanese would escort him from the main gate to the office and en route he would be met " casually " by one or two of the Committee members, who, in passing through a gateway or going up the office stairs, would do a little pre-arranged hustling, during which messages were exchanged. If this method failed, later, during the meeting that followed between the Commandant, Egger and certain members of the Committee, Ethel, who was present to take notes (usually sitting next to Egger), always managed to slip a note into his coat pocket or his attaché-case, which she sometimes used as a support for her shorthand pad.

Egger was the only official contact that the camp had with the outside world. He worked under tremendous difficulties: both he and his staff were watched very closely by the Japanese in Tsingtao and any move he made was regarded with the utmost suspicion. On each

trip to the camp he endeavoured to bring much-needed supplies. We depended upon him to purchase the medicines and drugs for the hospital, and some-times he would be able to bring in parcels for the internees from their friends in Tsingtao. In the beginning this was not too difficult, but gradually the Japs enforced a multitude of restrictions, and special passes and permits had to be obtained. Any official orders handed to Egger through the Committee were always carefully examined by the Japanese, who delighted in crossing off various items, particularly extra food for the hospital patients. Sometimes he went so far as to alter and occasionally forge these permits. Transportation by train from Tsingtao to Weihsien was always difficult and pilfering was rife.

On arrival at the camp we were instructed to deposit in the camp bank any money we had brought with us. Some handed over all, others only a token payment. After a month or two we began to receive "Comfort Money", being relief payments from our respective governments, for which we had to sign promissory notes known as " Comfort A ". Internees also signed promissory notes designated as "Comfort B" which paid for the upkeep of the hospital and bought medicines and drugs, etc. Any personal arrangements that an internee cared to make with his girl friend eventually became known as "Comfort C" ; promissory notes in these cases being usually waived in favour of a tin of jam, a bar of chocolate or a cake of soap!

There were, of course, people who were never short of funds, and again others who were always broke. The poker school, which held a twenty-four hour session immediately after pay-day, produced a few of the latter. The blackmarketeers were amongst those who usually had enough to keep body and soul together. Then there were the fortunate few who had ways and means of getting money into camp, and others, with three or four children to feed, who were perpetually without a cent. The canteen provided a few essentials such as matches, cigarettes, oil for cooking, peanut-butter and occasionally eggs and those in funds were able to buy up the rations of the bankrupt or the cigarettes of the non-smokers.

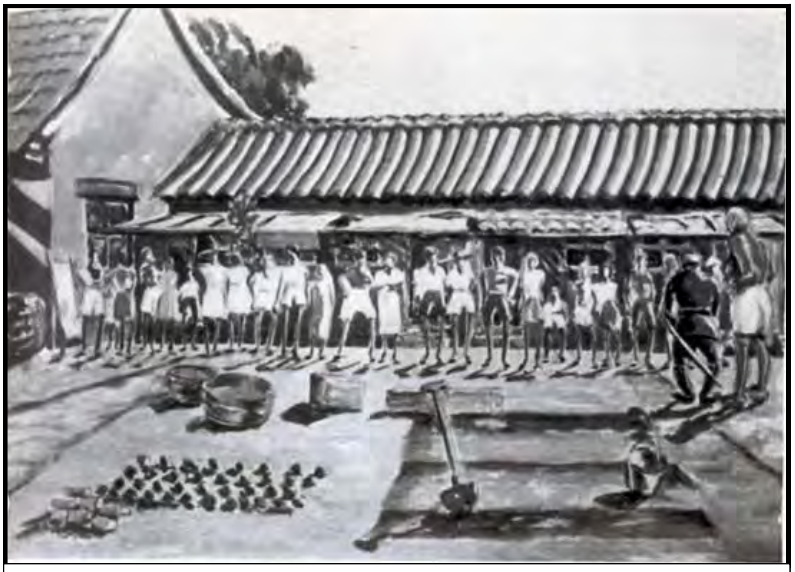
We had not been in camp for more than a few days before the black market began to operate: the first essential that people demanded and most easily obtained was eggs. Peasants loitered outside the walls with baskets of eggs, and it was merely a matter of finding a convenient spot out of the sentry's view, a few words of hasty bargaining, throwing over a rope and hauling up a basket of fresh country eggs. Even the amateurs managed with the greatest of ease. But in a few weeks the guards made some effort to put a stop to it, and as they became more alert, so black-marketing became a matter for the professionals, needing skill and careful planning.

The Catholic Fathers were the first to operate on a large and well-organised scale. The ringleader for some months was Father Scanlan, an Australian Trappist monk from a monastery north of Peking. Preference was given to women with large families to provide for, and during the day Father Scanlan would make his rounds, taking orders. At night thousands of dollars' worth of goods would pass over the wall: eggs, sugar, preserved fruits, jam, oil, tobacco, cigarettes, canned milk; we even got our promised strawberries, though not from the Japanese, but from Father Scanlan.

On the outside, regular bootlegging gangs were organised, the Hans, the Chaos and the Wangs. In the dead of night or at dawn they would send a representative over. Greased and clad only in a G-string, he would slip in, take the orders, "shroff" over the accounts, receive payment and quietly disappear. The guards had a suspicion that something was afoot, but apart from an occasional amateur with perhaps a dozen eggs or so, they failed to make any arrests. The Fathers had gone about it in a thorough manner. They made them-selves familiar with the habits of the guards and placed scouts in strategic positions to give ample warning, so that by the time the guards arrived, the Fathers concerned were either "sleeping" in a bed full of eggs and sugar, with contraband piled high beneath, or, if in the daylight hours, doing their washing or perhaps reading the Bible.

For some weeks they worked through a drainage hole at the base of the wall, and one morning, the coast apparently clear, Father Scanlan thought he would get a few eggs through. The guard had just been changed; he was not likely to be disturbed. He collected a wooden box on which he stood to make the necessary signals over the wall, and in a few moments the eggs were rolling through. The box was nearly half full when the warning was given. He had just time to move it in front of the drain and, spreading out his gown, sit down. Not having a Bible to read, he started immediately to sing as a truculent and suspicious guard appeared round the corner. The eggs continued to roll through the pipe and to break against the box. As the guard drew near, the Trappist Father sang more and more loudly in the hope that he would drown the noise of the continual stream of breaking eggs. The guard shouted the usual unintelligible string of Japanese at him and pointed over the wall; Scanlan continued to sing in Latin, calling on his brothers to come to his rescue. He had noticed a damp patch oozing round the side of the box: soon he would be engulfed in a river of broken eggs unless help came. Fortunately it did, and the placated guard left, looking somewhat puzzled and disappointed.

The camp was by no means ready for occupation by such a large group of people, and even the Japanese themselves realised that there was yet much to be done. Reluctantly, therefore, they allowed specially selected gangs in to complete the necessary repairs: cesspool coolies to whom they had sold the sole rights on this popular form of fertiliser, a tin-smith to make pots, pans



ROLL-CALL IN THE CAMP

and buckets for the use of the kitchens, and a group of carpenters. At first these workmen were not searched very closely and several of the carpenters used to fill their tool-boxes with eggs. In order to keep in close touch with these men, I made a regular contract for a couple of dozen eggs a day in an effort to gather what information I could regarding conditions outside the camp, but either they knew little about them, or refused to talk.

Having eventually gained the confidence of my egg man, I decided to have some Chinese clothes made, realising that it would be far too conspicuous to wear foreign clothes if one wanted to try and escape. Cloth was very expensive, and feeling that I should conserve my funds, I gave him a pair of sheets, which he agreed to dye black and have made into a Chinese jacket and trousers by his wife. In due course he came into the camp wearing the jacket over his own, which aroused no suspicions, as the Chinese wear from one to six layers, depending upon the temperature. The trousers, he promised, would be forthcoming in a day or so. As his work took him to various sections of the camp, and since at that time I was working in the butchery every morning, it was arranged that he should throw them through the back window of our room which overlooked one of the much-used footpaths of the camp.

One morning our neighbour, the Bishop of the Anglican Mission was lying on his bed reading when, suddenly, a pair of black trousers came flying through the window and landed on his chest. The Bishop's immediate reaction was one of righteous indignation. "Evidently," he thought "someone has stolen these trousers from a washing-line and, being caught in the act, has thrown them through the nearest window" In a moment he was stirred to action and, dashing up the alley, made record time to the path behind our row, waving the offending trousers in the air and shouting "Thief ! Thief !" A crowd soon gathered. The theft seemed difficult to explain, as there was no clothes-line in the vicinity. Much speculation ensued, but no one claimed the trousers and in due course the Bishop returned, having decided that the correct procedure was to hand them in to the lost property office. When I returned from work that afternoon, I was told the story of the mysterious Chinese trousers and, reluctantly, I decided that if I wanted my trousers the only thing to do was to own up. So I explained to the Bishop that I had ordered them as my own clothes got so greasy and dirty in the butchery. I felt very sure that he did not really appreciate my explanation, and from that time onwards he always looked a little surprised to see me amongst those present at the morning roll-call. The trousers having had so much publicity, I had no alternative but to wear them, and from then on they became known as "the Bishop's Jaegers".

There were of course several groups who from time to time interested themselves in the possibility of making a break from camp. For the first month or so C— of the China Soap Company, Arthur Hummel and myself worked on the idea. Through Chinese working in the camp, letters were dispatched to friends outside in an endeavour to make contacts; messages were sent to Tientsin and Tsingtao, and we even sent a messenger up to Peking, but all to no avail. We got into touch with some of the Catholic priests who, up to the time of concentration, had been working in Shantung, and received from them a lot of helpful information and sound advice, but nothing practical materialised.

Later I worked with D— who always swore that he had infallible connections. We held long uninterrupted conversations with the black- marketeers as to the possibility of being guided to the nearest Chungking troops, but with these people such matters always revolved around the question of money. Invariably they asked for a great deal more than we could possibly raise and we never got very far with them, as their main interest was the black market. Some months later our efforts were revived by one of the Catholic Fathers concerned in the black market. He had been in touch with someone who he was sure would help us. Many letters were exchanged over the wall, and a certain amount of money, but once again the plan fell through. By now it was well into the autumn and we realised that if we were going, we should have to get out before the winter set in, and as there seemed to be little hope of that, gradually the matter was dropped. Nevertheless I continued to keep up my contacts with the Chinese workers, and when they were changed, which was frequently, they would either recommend me to their successor or to someone else who was remaining, with the result that I had outside contacts the whole time.

It was not long before trading started amongst the internees — tinned food for cigarettes, a pair of shoes for three tins of jam, French lessons given for so many coal-balls a week, a stove built for a pair of trousers, a tin of coffee offered as a substitute for lavatory clean-up duty. Practical Helen Burton saw- the need for an " exchange emporium " and, scarce as housing space was, she

managed to convince the Committee that her project was a camp necessity and wheedled out of them the rights to a small tumble-down but in an out-of-the-way corner of the grounds. It had a roof which leaked four rough brick walls, a mud floor, and two gaping holes where the windows should have been. Helen had a wonderful way of getting people to do things for her, and soon persuaded her friends to collect tiles for the roof and bricks for the floor; others put in window-frames and a door, paint was "acquired" and the woodwork given a coat of green and the walls whitewashed. On July 4th, clad in a startling "Stars and Stripes" creation, she held an opening party for those who had helped her. It poured with rain for most of the day, culminating in a veritable cloudburst which demolished the camp wall for about fifty yards alongside the athletic field, an appropriate omen for Independence Day. Within a few days the "Camel Bell Exchange" was piled high with goods for exchange and sale, from Paris models to empty bottles. Soon there were queues of people waiting to rummage through the piles of clothing — a pair of shoes for Junior, pants for the old man in exchange for a dress, or maybe a lipstick for an old sweater of John's. It was not long before the "Camel Bell Exchange" received official recognition and became one of the camp institutions.

16. The "White Elephant" where sugar was exchanged for shoes, sheets for shirts etc.

Alcohol was always one of the most pressing problems amongst a certain section. In the early stages locally-made Chinese wine known as "pai ka'erh" could be obtained if one knew how. Some of the black-marketeers brought it in over the wall, and the Chinese servants working for the Japanese used to bring in a small amount. A quantity in bottles tied under the carts which brought in the supplies or came to collect the sewage, passed through the front gate under the eyes of the guards. One Chinese had a specially constructed tin container, flat and curved to fit next to his stomach, and secured with a sash. Unfortunately there were always one or two inebriates who, taking advantage of the situation, proceeded to get extremely drunk, and as was to be expected, this came to the notice of the Japanese. To ease the situation it was agreed between the Committee and the black-marketeers that no more would be brought in over the wall and with the added precautions the Japanese were taking, it became almost impossible to obtain, resulting in a much-increased demand on the hospital supply of medicinal alcohol. But this was soon detected, and when this source dried up the Japanese stepped into the breach by putting "hay rum" hair tonic on sale in the canteen, which was quickly bought up and consumed. After this, however, apart from an odd bottle of "eau-de-Cologne", there was practically nothing to be had. People then started to brew their own, and date wine became very popular, but a few of the more hard-pressed distilled alcohol, drop by drop, from sweet potatoes.

Returning to my quarters one night I passed P— in his pyjamas, standing outside his room throwing stones at one of the street lights. "How the devil do they expect one to sleep with this light shining through the window all night? Here, have a shot," and he handed me a stone. We were unsuccessfully engaged in this schoolboy occupation when P—'s room-mate B—, a very precise professor, put his head out of the window. "My dear P—,you will never do it that way. By the application of an elementary scientific principle, we can achieve our end with the minimum of exertion. The bulb is hot; if we expose it to a sudden change of temperature, it will explode." In a moment he came out, clad in a long flannel nightgown, and carrying a large tin mug full of water. Before we realised what was happening, he threw the water at the offending bulb and, as he had predicted, it exploded. Too late, P— suddenly recognised his own mug in which he had just placed his false teeth for the night. When I left, the pair of them were still grovelling in the dust around the base of the now extinct lamp, searching for P—'s dentures.

Among the high-lights of the camp were undoubtedly the four hundred or more Catholic Fathers and the Sisters. They were magnificent. There was no work to which they were not willing to turn their hands. The cheerful manner and the thoroughness with which they did the most menial jobs, their eagerness to assist anyone at any time, their unchanging disposition, their aptitude in mixing with every sort of nationality, and, last but not least, their ability to play as hard as they worked, not only endeared them to the whole community but were not important factors in maintaining the morale of the camp.

There were seven Catholic Bishops, and their appearance at the Sunday Mass in their gorgeous robes, and the whole-some singing of the Fathers, made this the most popular service. Another sect to which a lot of credit is due for their unstinting labours was the

Salvation Army. Theirs was a small group but they more than pulled their weight. As was only to be expected amongst such a diversified gathering there were always the few who tried to avoid work and did little to co-operate, but on the whole the majority did their share.

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CHAPTER III

"THIS FUTILE EXISTENCE"

During the summer there had been talk of a repatriation ship for the Americans, and the possibility of the Catholic Fathers and Sisters being sent back to Peking, where they would be confined to their mission compounds. Few of the Catholics wanted to leave, as they were having a better time in camp than they would if restricted to their own company and confined to their own quarters in Peking. Some sects protested against the proposed move, but the ball had been rolling for several months and it was impossible to stop it now, and so, during August, after six months of camp life, they left for Peking. Bands played them a farewell, tears were shed, and everyone turned out to see them leave. A month later about two hundred Americans left for Shanghai to join the repatriation ship Gripsholm. They included some of the most prominent and useful of the American community: amongst them was Billy Christian. A large number of them were from the Peking kitchen and we worked practically all night to prepare food for them to take on the two-day rail journey to Shanghai, and were up again at four in the morning to cook their fare-well breakfast

That was a most depressing day. It was with mixed feelings that we bade them goodbye and lined the walls to cheer and to wave farewell to these most fortunate people. 0f late we had become numbed with despondency by our futile existence, and this sudden exodus of our friends did a lotto pull people together and make them realise that perhaps after all we were not living in a completely forgotten and lost world of our own. The departure of the Fathers and the Americans marked the end of the era of easy living in the "Courtyard of the Happy Way".

Labour hours for the remaining internees had to be increased. With the coming of winter, food supplies dwindled. There were many meatless days and vegetables were scarce. The poor quality of the yeast and flour resulted in heavy, indigestible bread. Our supply of breakfast food, kaoliang or green beans, soon ran out and we had to resort to bread porridge. This was made by soaking overnight all the stale left-overs from the bread-room. The next morning the mixture was squeezed as dry as possible and run through the mincing machine,

thickened with several pounds of flour, flavoured with cinnamon and sweetened with saccharine. Needless to say it was one of the less popular dishes, a poor second to the mess of green beans or kaoliang, which was made in exactly the same way.

Lunch consisted of the inevitable stew, sometimes with meat to flavour it, sometimes without. By the evening there was little left to cook but soup, and occasionally, if we could get bread dough, there might be hot cakes.

Cooking was greatly handicapped by the poor quality of the coal. It was practically dust and burned only with a liberal application of wood. Finally, when the wood ran out, we had to mix the coal-dust with earth and water, and dry it into bricks in the sun. This had long been the practice for home cooking, and no matter what the time of day, one could not walk down an alley without seeing someone making coal-balls. The most satisfactory coal-balls were made by taking a handful of the mixture and pressing it into a firm, round ball. The more fastidious used a slightly wetter mixture which they scooped up with the aid of a small tin nailed to the end of a stick. Although there were a few diehards who insisted to the end on the personal touch, the majority were eventually converted to the tin-and-stick method.

The general shortage was soon reflected in the canteen, and with the Fathers gone, black-market supplies dwindled. Before long, however, Tommy Wade, of the British-American Tobacco Company, and his associates had more than made up for the absence of the Fathers and his organisation was better. He had excellent contacts outside the wall and many even people never knew where the supplies had come from, as he used distributing agents in the camp. Of course, his was not the only group; others operated occasionally but with less success.

The Japanese were fairly sure that black-market activities were being carried out on a large scale, but they were never able to get to the bottom of them. Now and again they would catch someone and there would be talk of general action to be taken against the whole community. The culprit would have his canteen privileges withdrawn, or be sent to gaol for a week. One day, when searching some Chinese workmen prior to passing them into the camp, they found a letter concealed on one of the coolies ; he was taken into the guard-house, beaten until unconscious, and was not seen again. Fortunately the note did not bear the name of any individual, and it was impossible for the Japs to attach the blame to any particular internee, but it gave them the opportunity for which they had been waiting.

Notices were put up and the Committee informed that if anyone was caught talking to a Chinese, he would be removed to the Chinese gaol at Weihsien for a period of from two to three months' imprisonment. No one was allowed within ten feet of the wall and we were warned that anyone caught communicating with Chinese over the wall would be shot. This had the desired effect, and for several weeks all black-market activities ceased. But as the guards slackened their vigilance, so operations were resumed, although it was necessary to have a perfect system of our own guards to keep watch and give adequate warning at whatever part of the wall was being operated. Shortly after this a barbed-wire and electrified fence was erected about a yard or so from the wall on the outside and searchlights were mounted on the watch-towers at each corner of the wall. Although black-market activities were thus made more difficult, they continued more or less as usual, but on one occasion, after warning had been given that the guards were approaching, an unfortunate Chinese, in his hurry to get away, slipped, and making contact with the wire, was electrocuted. His body was allowed to hang on the wire for the greater part of the next day as a warning to his confederates.

The winter of '43 came early. The Japanese had decided that stoves would be issued on 8th December and nothing the Committee could do would induce them to put this date forward. Internees started to build stoves in their rooms of bricks, mud or empty biscuit tins. Few managed to get stove-pipes, and empty tins were at a premium; joined together, they made a very satisfactory substitute. The coal was so bad that one got very little heat unless there was an exception-ally good draught. If one was fortunate enough to have a job that took one anywhere near the coal pile or the kitchen, sometimes an occasional bucket of coal or coke could be scrounged. Bankers and shipping magnates spent hours going over the ash-dumps from the kitchen and hot-water boilers, tirelessly scraping, raking and sifting the ashes in the hope of finding pieces of coke or partially-burnt coal. It was no longer safe to leave one's supply of coal-balls outside, much less any firewood one was fortunate enough to possess. Stoves were the chief topic of conversation, no one getting much heat, but each having a pet theory of his own.

Although the winter had started early, it proved to be a very mild one and by the beginning of March one could sit in the sun and thaw. Arthur Porter, Ramage and I had been fortunate in being able to move to more salubrious quarters, a large room — with a view to the hills far in the south — on the second storey of a building occupied by the dozen or so Catholic Fathers who had remained. With the coming of spring, the countryside awoke from the long inactivity of winter. Fields of winter wheat daubed the brown earth with splashes of brilliant green. The greenish-yellow haze of the distant willows showed that their buds were swelling in the life-giving warmth of the sun. Farmers, in groups of twos and threes, ploughed the soil and sowed their summer crops, followed by flocks of crows, noisily engaged in pecking up the grain from the newly-turned earth. With the warm freshness of spring, one could not but be aware of the

urge for freedom and the desire to begin life anew.

The few Fathers who remained were an extremely jovial crowd, particularly Father de Jaegher, with whom I became very friendly. He had lived in the interior of China for many years and spoke and read the language fluently. We spent many hours together walking around the hospital grounds discussing the possibilities of escape, but we still lacked any accurate information regarding conditions in the immediate vicinity. We had word of Communists attacking the Japanese and occasionally there were rumours of Nationalist forces. De Jaegher wrote a letter in Latin to a French priest some fifteen to twenty miles away, asking for information. The reply was most discouraging, emphasising the folly of attempting to escape into a district thick with traitor troops, Communists and independent guerrillas, where the allegiance and disposition of the forces changed from day to day. This we took with a grain of salt, suspecting that the priest was afraid either of being drawn into our plans or of reprisals.

The Japanese, having decided to dispense with the cesspool coolies by installing a drainage system, employed about fifty to sixty Chinese coolies to dig the ditches and lay the pipes. Although they placed guards over these workers, there were still opportunities of conversing with them secretly, and now for the first time we were able to collect a little reliable information on conditions and the disposition of the various factions outside.

We learned that Weihsien and a surrounding area of about twenty miles was in the hands of Chinese puppet troops, supported by a large Japanese garrison at the railway town of Fangtze, five miles south-east of the camp. Outside this ring were contesting groups of Communists, semi-puppet units and pro-Nationalist units, the strongest and nearest force being a Communist unit some twenty miles to the north-west.

Amongst the workers we found a man who at one time had been attached to these Communist forces. De Jaegher had a way with these people and it was not long before we had the man deeply involved in our plans. We had always felt that we should make for the south, where we would have the advantage of hilly country, where anti-Japanese elements were usually to be found, but we reluctantly gave up this idea in favour of seeking the Communist group to the north-west. Plans proceeded apace, and definite promises were made, but as the time drew near our man apparently got cold feet and there was nothing we could do to persuade him to carry the plans through.

In the meantime Father *Hanquet* had been in touch with another man who had agreed to take us south — this fell in with our original ideas. Detailed plans were again made, sketches were drawn of the immediate countryside, and a rendezvous agreed upon outside a small village about half a mile south-west of the camp, where this man and his friend were to meet us. The final arrangements were that these two Chinese would pass along a footpath between the camp and village before dusk, thus indicating that everything was in order and that as soon as it was dark we were to join them outside the east wall of the appointed hamlet. We were packed and ready. After supper we went up to the bell-tower of one of the school buildings from which one could get a complete panorama of the surrounding country. The sun set and dusk came, but not a sign of our friends. Once again we had failed.

Discouraged and disappointed at our continual failure, it was some weeks before our spirits revived and we renewed discussions. By then the sewerage scheme

had been completed and the workmen dismissed, but fortunately there was a shortage of pipe and they were unable to connect all the cesspools. They had therefore to retain the services of three coolies who continued to come in daily, and on one of these we directed our efforts. He was a willing lad, and it was not long before, with the help of generous subsidies we had him working entirely on our behalf. It was from him that We first heard of a strong pro-Chungking unit to the north-east.

One morning at our regular meeting in one of the more secluded latrines, he informed us that the contract for the privilege of cleaning the cesspools would expire in a few days. A pro-Japanese gang had sent the Commandant a tender for this work, offering higher rates than his employers could pay. After much consultation de Jaegher and I decided to raise the money between us and, through this fellow, buy the contract ourselves. The money was raised and days of haggling ensued between our man and the Japanese; the price was raised several times but in the end it was proved that for once the Japs felt this was a matter of politics rather than money, and insisted upon their own gang getting the job. This cut all connections with the outside except for the tinsmith, who was too scared to be of much use. But before our cesspool coolie left we arranged with him to pass the camp at certain hours three times a week, and on the all-clear signal messages continued to be exchanged between us by throwing them over the wall.

By late spring conditions had deteriorated to a marked degree. Supplies were repeatedly cut, comfort money was most irregular and eventually ceased altogether, owing to some altercation between the Japanese and the Swiss over the rate of exchange. The manual workers in the camp were not getting enough food to eat, few people had any money left and black-marketing was becoming increasingly difficult. People were selling their jewellery, gold watches, wedding rings, precious stones, furs and false teeth, anything on which they could raise a little extra money. These were bought up by black-marketeers and sold through the Japanese guards or to Chinese over the wall.

A wave of avariciousness swept over the camp; every man for himself; the food queue became a continuous outlet for the griping and dissatisfied, sharp eyes watched the servers, who had to be most meticulous in the apportionment of the prescribed clipper or half-dipper of stew, and the size of the potatoes had to be graded, but even so it was impossible to avoid complaints. The Japanese turned a deaf ear to the pleas of the Committee for more food.

Food parcels which we sometimes received from friends in Peking, Tientsin and Tsingtao were now very irregular, and when they did arrive a very large percentage of the contents had been pilfered en route. The regular breakfast was now the watery pap known as "bread porridge", the inevitable thin stew at noon and sometimes soup in the evenings or just bread and tea, and bread, bread and more bread, and nothing to put on it. Only in the hospital, thanks to the foresight of Doctor Grice, who, by alternately threatening and cajoling, had succeeded in building up a reserve of food for the patients, was a decent meal obtainable. More than six weeks had elapsed since Egger's last visit.

The Committee was worried: the food situation threatened to get worse; there was no indication of comfort-money payments being resumed. Italy had capitulated, the Americans were pressing the Japanese in the Pacific, and the papers began to admit the possibility of an Allied invasion of Europe. With the turn of the tide the position of the camp became a matter of some concern. What would be the Japanese reaction to increasing Allied victories? Would they take it out of the internees or would they endeavour to ingratiate themselves with the camp? What would be the final outcome? What were the conditions outside the camp? Communists? Roving hordes of irregular bandit-troops? Were there any reliable Chungking forces in the area? Would the Japanese in the camp be attacked or would they, in a mad spirit of reprisal, massacre the internees?

At this point rumours were heard amongst those close to certain members of the Committee, of a letter having been received from a Chungking unit. There was talk of a ridiculous scheme to rescue members of the camp, of a secret airfield and relays of planes that would whisk us all off to Chungking.

This, I decided, was worth further investigation, and finding de Jaegher, we went off together to see *Hubbard* of the American Board Mission, who, we felt, would know all about it. *Hubbard* was an extremely sound man with years of experience of China and the Chinese, a man of wide interests and incidentally the leading ornithologist in North China; I had made a practice of discussing with him the various plans which we had made from time to time. Being on the Committee, we felt sure he would know the details of this latest development. We were not disappointed. He showed us the original letters and the Committee's courteous but non-committal reply.

The letter in Chinese received from the Commander of this Chungking unit was certainly interesting:

H.Q. 4th Mobile Column,
Shantung -Kiangsu War Area.

Beleaguered British and Americans: Greetings to all. The dwarf islanders, the brigands and robbers! have upset the order of the world. My countrymen have experienced their brutality in war and widespread calamity with human sacrifice beyond

any comparison in human history. Without taking account of virtue and measuring their strength, they dared to make enemies of your countries so that you have met with great misfortune and have been robbed of your livelihood and happiness.

We can well imagine that your life in Hades must reach the limits of inhuman cruelty. As I write this I tear out my hair by the roots. But the Allies in the Pacific, in south-east Asia and on the mainland of China have counter-attacked with great success. I beg of you to let your spirits rise.

My division is able to rescue you, snatching you from the tiger's mouth, but the territory we control is small and restricted and I cannot guarantee your safety for a long period. If you will request your consuls to send planes to pick you up and take you to the rear after I have released you, then my divisions can certainly save you. Regarding this matter I am asking Mr. Chen to find some way of getting in touch with you and to make arrangements.

I respectfully hope that you will be able to carry out these plans and send you all my good wishes.

Wang Yu-min

33rd year of the Republic of China,
Fifth month, fourth day
(4/5/'44)

Together with this was received a letter in English from Mr. Chen :

DEAR FRIENDS,

This serves to inform you that first of all I have to introduce myself to you. I was first-class interpreter in the Chinese Labour Corp, B.E.F., during the last War. . . . I have been in Ch'angyi just a couple of months and the first thing I decided with the Commander and the Assistant Commander is to arrange to save you all out from the camp and then send you back to your own country. But please note that from here to Chungking is rather difficult to go right through as the Jap soldiers are all blocked up the ways. So we have to arrange to send you all back by air. In this connection, we have to send a few special men (and I myself) to Chungking to connect the matter and request the Chinese Central Government, American and British Consulate-Generals to arrange to send down some big aeroplanes for the transportation, so therefore before we save you all from the camp we have a lot of things to do such as to build the aerodrome for the planes to land and etc. However, after everything settled up we will let you know beforehand. Kindly believe us that we are easily to save you all out as we have over 60,000 soldiers staying in Ch'angyi area . . . wishing you all have good luck. Please keep patient for the time being. We may not act till the kaoliang crops grow up. Wait! Wait!

I remain,
Yours very truly,
S. W. Chen

P.S.—God will help us.

Subsequent letters were received, elucidating the details of this hare-brained scheme and announcing that construction of the landing field had been commenced in the area held by these troops. As soon as the crops had grown to their maximum height, the camp would be attacked, the Japanese guards annihilated, the internees transported to this airfield and flown off by relays of planes to Chungking, where they would live happily ever after!

The Committee replied that much as they appreciated the compassionate motives behind this scheme, they feared that owing to the large percentage of women and children, the sick and the aged, it would not be a practical move and regretted that it could not in these circumstances be considered.

It was not long before a reply was received which, completely ignoring the Committee's polite but firm refusal, announced that their representative was about to leave for Chungking and requested a letter of introduction to our Embassies. It further exhorted the internees to be patient, for as soon as the crops were high enough to afford cover, they would be rescued.

The Committee, who had not the slightest desire to be rescued in this way, were in rather a dilemma, as, if this unit did in their enthusiasm attack the camp, there was no knowing what would be the outcome. Something must be done to stop it. Ted McLaren, H—, de Jaegher and I discussed the matter at great length; de Jaegher and I felt that at last we were in touch with a genuine pro-Chungking unit and that this was the moment to which we had been working for the past year. If the matter was judiciously handled, we could obtain our objective and at the same time be of some service to the camp. We convinced McLaren and H— that for the benefit of the camp this connection should not be ignored, and pointed out that we should work towards turning this wild scheme to some more practical form of assistance of real benefit. From then onwards the matter was turned over to us with the understanding that we should keep them fully informed on any future developments.

We immediately sent off a letter to Mr. Chen to the effect that this whole scheme was of great importance to the camp and needed much careful planning, which could not possibly be carried out successfully through the present hazardous means of communication. We therefore suggested sending two representatives to the

Commander's Head-quarters to discuss this matter. In due course we received a reply from Mr. Chen stating that he thought this could be arranged and he was leaving immediately for Headquarters to discuss details with Commander Wang Shang-chih and Vice-Commander Wang Yu-min.

In the meantime we had started to assemble what we thought it necessary to take with us, deciding that we would limit our gear to a knapsack apiece. De Jaegher's superior *Father Rutherford*, happened to call in just as he was re-checking the contents of his knapsack. It did not take *Father Rutherford* long to tumble to the idea and he forbade de Jaegher to leave. McLaren, H— and I argued with him alternately but without success. Although entirely in favour of the scheme, he felt that he could not afford to have the Catholic Church involved for fear of consequences, not so much in the camp as elsewhere, and now that de Jaegher's part in this plan had come to his knowledge, he had no alternative but to stop him. He added, however, that he would of course pray for the success of the mission. This was a great disappointment as we considered de Jaegher's experience and knowledge of the language invaluable.

Looking around for someone else to take his place, I asked Arthur Hummel, who needed little persuasion to fall in with the scheme.

Although successive disappointments had made us some-what sceptical, we could not help but feel that this time we had the right connection and it was with eager anticipation that we kept our appointment at the wall on the scheduled days. But for a week our man failed to come. Then one day he appeared only to signal "no message". Another week passed without any news and we felt that, after all, this connection which had offered so much promise was obviously going to fall through, as had all the others.

H = Emmanuel Hanquet

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Part Three

CHAPTER I

PROVINCIAL POLITICS

SKETCH MAP SHOWING GENERAL WANG YU-MIN'S AREA IN RELATION TO SHANTUNG PROVINCE

JAPAN had long regarded the province of Shantung as one of her particular spheres of influence. During the close of the nineteenth century, when China was being forced out of her self-imposed isolationist policy by the avid plunderings of the western powers and Japan, Germany, not to be outdone by Great Britain, Russia and France, secured a 99-year lease on the Chiaochow Bay area on the coast of Shantung. Here she built and fortified the port city of Tsingtao, extended railways into the interior and set about developing the trade of this rich and hitherto untapped province. Japan's decision to participate in the First World War on the side of the Allies was influenced by what she hoped to gain in China while the western powers were engaged in Europe. She attacked and captured Tsingtao and took over Germany's political and industrial interests throughout the province.

When in later years as a result of the Washington Conference Japan was forced to return this booty to China, she nevertheless continued to exert all possible influence through bribery, political intrigue and commercial enterprise, and succeeded in maintaining to no small degree her influence over this province. In line with her policy of obstructing the unification of China under the Central Government, Japan gave support to any move that would further the alienation of the Shantung Provincial Government from Nanking.

For some years prior to the "Lukouchiao Incident" in July 1937, which marked the beginning of China's open war against Japan, the Japanese had been seeking to gain influence over the Governor of this province, General Han Fu-ch'u, and had been given a receptive hearing.

At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, Shantung under the government of General Han, officially was completely under the jurisdiction of the Central Government at Nanking, but in actuality Han remained, as he was originally, one of the old war-lord school, outwardly submitting to the will of the Central Government but in fact enjoying almost complete freedom of action within his province.

Shortly after the "Lukouchiao Incident" General Feng Yu-hsiang, then Vice-Minister of War, went north, hoping to regain control of, and co-operate with, his former sub-ordinates who were scattered in influential positions through-out the northern provinces; General Han was one of these. Although Feng's intentions were not without personal ambition, there is no doubt that had he been successful in uniting the Central Government forces in North China under his command, resistance to the Japanese onslaught would have been stiffened. As it was, he failed completely, and within a year the Japanese had dealt decisive blows to the divided North China command.

It was the beginning of '38 before the Japanese commenced their invasion of Shantung, and by this time public opinion had forced the Governor, General Han, to declare himself for the Central Government, and he announced his intention to defend the province against the invader. But in spite of this it was well known that Han had engaged in frequent personal interviews with the Japanese "China Experts", and it was generally believed that an understanding had been reached.

He sent a detachment of troops north to the provincial border to stem the Japanese advance, but this

*The **Battle of Tai'erzhuang***

(Chinese: 台兒莊會戰; pinyin: Tái'érzhūang Huìzhàn) was a battle of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1938, between the armies of the Republic of China and Japan. The battle was the first major Chinese victory of the war. It humiliated the Japanese military and its reputation as an invincible force, while for the Chinese it represented a tremendous morale boost.

Tai'erzhuang is located on the eastern bank of the Grand Canal of China and was a frontier garrison northeast of Xuzhou. It was also the terminus of a local branch railway from Lincheng. Xuzhou itself was the junction of the Jinpu Railway(Tianjin-Pukou) and the Longhai Railway (Lanzhou-Lianyungang) and the headquarters of the KMT's 5th War Zone.

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was considered more of a face-saving move than a real attempt to resist, and with but a token resistance in the suburbs of Tsinan, General Han evacuated the city and retreated south of the capital, where his provincial troops, stiffened by the arrival of Central Government reinforcements, were successful in holding up the Japanese southward advance. Advantage was taken of this respite by the Central Government to complete preparations for a counter-offensive in southern Shantung.

After the battle of Taierchuang on the southern border of Shantung, where the Chinese forces inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Japanese, the Central Government attempted to stabilise southern Shantung, but some three months later it became evident that the Japanese intended to make a concerted drive on this area from both the north and the south, to converge on the railway junction of Hsuchowfu. Defence preparations were made, but without success. The Japanese swept through southern Shantung and occupied Hsuchowfu, thus marking the virtual control of the whole of Shantung by the Japanese and the complete occupation of the strategic railway line from Tientsin to Nanking and Shanghai.

With the Central Army's defeat at Hsuchowfu they with-drew westward to Kaifeng and the Peking—Hankow railway junction town of Chengchow, and the Japanese, after consolidating their position, pressed their attack to the west, closely following on the heels of the retreating Chinese Army.

At this crucial point nature intervened. Wending its tortuous way from the Tibetan uplands through the provinces of Kansu, Ninghsia, Shensi, Shansi and Honan, the Yellow River finds its outlet to the sea in the Pei Hai Gulf on the northern coast of Shantung. Throughout the history of China, this river has brought with it alternate disaster and prosperity to the toiling farmers inhabiting its valley. In the arid deserts of Ninghsia and Shensi it is the one and only source of irrigation, transforming the dry desert into fertile agricultural lands. As it flows from the highlands of Tibet and forces its way through the precipitous and narrow gorges of Kansu into the soft, loess soil of Shensi, it gathers a heavy silt deposit. Entering on the great plains of North China, the river-bed widens and the rate of flow decreases, and gradually this silt sinks to the bed of the river. To counter-act this continual rise of the river-bed, dykes are built along each side of the river to confine it to its bed. As the years go by, so the bed of the river is raised, necessitating the dykes being built higher to contain it within its course, with the result that the river is flowing at a height considerably above that of the surrounding country. Sometimes in the rainy season, when the pressure of water increases, a weak spot in the dyke gives way. The resulting terrific pressure of water and dissolves the dykes into so much mud and the surrounding country becomes inundated.

Such a flood occurred in '39. For hundreds of miles the country was turned into a huge lake dotted here and there with an occasional island. Thousands of troops, both Japanese and Chinese, were caught in this flood and drowned, together with peasants and their livestock; others, isolated on these small islands, starved to death or died from disease, thus bringing to an end the war in this area. The Chinese forces, safe behind this mass of water, withdrew to Chengchow, and the Japanese returned to their base at Hsuchowfu. The main theatre of war shifted to the area around Hankow on the Yangtze River, the temporary seat of the Chinese National Government.

As a result of this flood enormous areas were laid waste and in certain places the silt deposit was such that even today one can travel for miles through completely barren land. Occasionally one can see the remains of a village, perhaps the graceful curving roof of a temple or the top branches of a withered tree projecting a few feet above the silt. The peasants have gone. Of those who did not perish in the flood many succumbed to starvation and disease; famine and pestilence raged. Now, with the Japanese defeat, a few have returned to the location of their previous homes and are eking out a starvation existence encamped above the sites of their old villages, living literally on the roof-tops of their former homes. Although this disaster checked the Japanese advance to the west, it devastated a once rich and fertile land and accounted for a greater loss of life than did any military engagement during the war.

By 1939 all the Central Government troops had been withdrawn from Shantung and the Japanese had securely established themselves along the main communication lines, placing garrisons at all the railway stations and at prefecture cities in the interior. Thousands of Japanese citizens arrived at Tsingtao and were gradually dispersed west along the railway to Weihsien, Tsinan and intermediate stations. In Shantung the first stage of the Japanese plan for the domination of China was accomplished. It now only remained for the Japanese to consolidate their position in the interior by intensive "mopping-up" operations, and the rich agricultural and mineral products of the province would be theirs for the taking.

"Mopping-up" operations continued throughout the years '40 and '41 with but little success from the Japanese point of view. Japanese-sponsored newspapers gave glowing accounts of operations successfully carried out at various points in the interior against the "bandit forces", announcing the complete annihilation of the "bandits" and the pacification of the particular area. Almost invariably, within three or four months that point would again be in the news, the "bandits" re-annihilated and the area again pacified. By the end of '41 the Japanese were still as far from realising their objective as they were in '39.

Who were these people who so successfully prevented the invaders from consolidating their gains and reaping the spoils of aggression? In the Japanese papers they were dubbed as "bandits", "Communists" and sometimes as "Chungking irregulars". In the Central Government's newspapers they were seldom mentioned; only if some out-standing success against the Japanese was achieved were they claimed as "Central Government forces". To the Shantungese they were known as the "yu-chi-tui", which is the equivalent of "guerrillas". In reality they were local militia with a backbone of Chinese Army veterans who, rather than retreat with the Central Government forces, had preferred to remain and protect their homesteads and grain-lands from Japanese pillage. These people, by their continual pin-Pricks, made the Japanese domination of Shantung, both from the military and economic point of view, a source of continual worry and a headache for which there appeared to be no sedative.

Early in '39 the Central Government ordered the opening of a training school for guerrillas in the mountains of southern Shantung. During the half-year or so that it functioned, a small group of patriots was trained in the art of guerrilla warfare and it was they who, returning to their native districts, formed the backbone of the guerrilla movement which harassed the Japanese continuously during the remaining years of the war.

During the early stages of the Japanese invasion of Shantung there had been a tacit understanding of co-operation between the Communists and the Nationalist forces, but, as the Central Government forces became weaker, the Communists recruited and expanded under the banner of patriotism. As the Nationalists were gradually forced to withdraw from the south by Japanese pressure and by Communist attacks on their lines of communication, the areas which they vacated were occupied largely by Communists and, to a lesser extent, by guerrillas.

The guerrilla units settled into more or less specified areas and built up strong local militia forces which were, for the most part, composed of peasants recruited from that particular district in which the unit had originated. They were fighting primarily for the right to till and reap their own soil and to protect their homes and families from Japanese vandalism. Patriotism as such, particularly with the farmer-peasant recruits, was something not yet very clearly understood. They were concerned more with the material things of life. They knew that if their district was under Japanese control, their crops would be taken away from them, their pigs and cattle driven off to the Japanese garrisons and slaughtered, their mules and horses requisitioned for military use, their young men taken for enforced labour. Even their womenfolk would not be safe. What remnant of their crops they were allowed to keep would have to be sold at fixed prices; they would be told what to plant, and when. They were fighting to maintain their accustomed way of life.

The Communists, on the other hand, were essentially an alien body which had injected itself into the area and had gradually absorbed local support in certain districts as the only alternative available to the people, after the retreat of the Central Government forces, other than Japanese subjugation. Here also the peasants thought they were fighting to preserve their original mode of life, but in this case they soon learned otherwise. They found that they were involved in something very new, a way of life entirely contrary to that which they had lived since time immemorial. Caught in the web they had no alternative. With uncertainty and fear in their hearts, the older generation watched the training of their sons and daughters under this new scheme of things. There was opposition but this was removed by the extinction of life; against such fundamental means of eradicating opposition, the people had no recourse, and as the older generation became broken and whipped in spirit, so their sons and daughters, under their intense indoctrination, gained a new strength and understanding. They soon believed that they were crusading for a new cause, a new way of life, and for this they were fighting the Japanese invaders.

The Japanese, failing to obtain conclusive results with their mopping-up operations, changed their policy from one of independent military aggression to that of conciliatory cooperation with Chinese who were willing to subjugate themselves to Japanese control. Working out from the railway zone and from their established garrisons in the interior, they set up puppet governments and reorganised puppet troops, supplying them with arms and ammunition. In this manner they divided the province into many districts, thus hoping to control the Chinese through the Chinese.

Cooperating with these newly established units, they moved their troops from one district to another in an effort to Promote their new "Peace Pacification Movement" and to wipe out guerrilla and Communist activities. Fostering war by war, they endeavoured to gain control of large areas of Shantung, and thereby strengthen their economic structure so enabling them to pursue the Asiatic war to its final conclusion.

Vastly superior in armaments, they gradually established control over large areas through the support of Chinese puppet troops. It was not long before these puppet troops, feeling secure under the protection of the Japanese, began to make independent excursions into nearby guerrilla areas, ravaging and pillaging as the Japanese had seldom done.

Encouraged by the success of their policy, the Japanese interlaced intrigue with aggression, and many guerrilla areas, under pressure of constant threat,

negotiated non-aggression pacts with the Japanese. Through their puppet forces and these allied guerrillas the Japanese fostered intrigue and misunderstanding, thus forestalling any possibility of concerted action and creating an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion.

At the time of the outbreak of the Pacific war in December '41, the situation in Shantung had settled down to a three-cornered struggle. The Japanese and their puppet troops, pressed by the guerrillas and the Communists, were kept continually on the move. The Communists attacked both the Japanese and the guerrillas; the guerrillas fought both the Japanese and the Communists. Nationalistic ideals were submerged in this basic struggle for existence. One fought to protect one's home and family, for the right to till one's land — far stronger reasons to the Chinese peasants than those of National Salvation. It was something they understood, something they were accustomed to, and on this point the guerrilla leaders showed their sagacity, uniting the struggle against the Japanese with the instinctive desire of the peasant to protect his livelihood.

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Part Three

CHAPTER II

A GUERRILLA PERSONALITY

WHO was this guerrilla leader **Wang Yu-min**, who so blithely talked of rescuing the 1800 internees from Weihsien concentration camp and flying them to West China?

Born of well-to-do peasant stock, he had the advantage of a good middle-school education and showed more aptitude for learning than for farming and the grain and weaving business in which his father was interested. Amongst the youths of his own age in his native village of Chingpu he was the only one who took a serious interest in political affairs. It was not long before father Wang realised that his eldest son had no desire to continue in the family business; nor did he seem fitted for the care of the land. Disappointed, but, on the other hand, secretly proud of his scholarly son, he needed little persuasion by Yu-min to give his agreement to his becoming a school teacher.

During his leisure hours Yu-min continued with his studies and soon became leader of the small discussion group of teachers from the neighbouring schools. His absorption in political affairs led him to join the Nationalist party, and as a member of this political organisation his reputation amongst the local community was further enhanced. Although his learning and comprehension of current affairs was well above the local standard, he did not lose touch with the uneducated masses of the village people. On the contrary, he organised village clubs at which open discussions were held on problems of common interest to the villagers. At these meetings Yu-min learned a great deal of their problems and their outlook on political affairs, which he soon found to be very limited. He took advantage of these meetings to expound certain points of the government policy, and by using the simplest language and interspersing anecdotes of human interest, he held their attention and gradually built up amongst the more intelligent a sense of national consciousness.

With the annexation of Manchuria by the Japanese, Yu-min devoted more of his time to the political aspect of affairs. For generations large numbers of Shantung peasants had emigrated to Manchuria to seek a living, but now, with the Japanese occupation, travellers returned empty-handed and with tales of hardship and oppression, and on such a back-ground of their personal experiences Yu-min painted the political scene to these people in simple and straightforward language.

Within a few years Yu-min was appointed principal of one of the local middle schools. In his hands rested the education of over one thousand children and directly under him was a staff of thirty teachers, men and women. In spite of this added responsibility, as the political situation in China deteriorated, Yu-min devoted more of his time to the furthering of political consciousness amongst the farmers and peasants. He made frequent trips to the provincial capital, Tsinan, and to the port city of Tsingtao, in order to better his political connections. He had come to realise that war with Japan was inevitable and that from the military point of view there was little he could do to prepare the people, but every day that passed gave him an opportunity to educate them towards a spirit of nationalism. His efforts were not without criticism from his colleagues, but he remained firm in his belief that success, whether personal or national, could only be achieved with the goodwill and backing of the people, and so, fully aware of the gathering storm, he redoubled his efforts.

At the outbreak of the war, Yu-min resigned from his role as principal. Freed from his educational ties, he travelled throughout his native district of Changyi from dawn till late in the night, from hamlet to hamlet, propagating a war of resistance. Realising that armed opposition was not yet possible amongst the farming population, he spoke of a war of passive resistance, of non-co-operation, pending the time when active resistance could be organised.

As the Japanese approached the borders of Shantung, an atmosphere of uneasiness and despondency prevailed amongst the people; there was some brave talk, but in their hearts they had no confidence in the ability of the provincial troops to stem the Japanese advance. Families of officials departed on long-delayed visits to relatives in more salubrious climes ; commodity and foodstuff prices began to fluctuate ; rumours, good and bad, spread from door to door and from town to village ; proclamations, edicts and news bulletins were issued by the various departments of the local government ; reassuring statements and professions of loyalty to the Central Government were posted on the walls of towns and villages throughout the province on the order of the Governor. There was much marshalling of troops; parades were held, bugles were blown and interminable speeches were made; troops were moved here and there without any definite plan; an antiquated armoured train was dusted over and exhibited at various stations along the railway, but still no reinforcements were sent to the strategically important garrison towns on the northern border of the province.

With the occupation of the capital by the Japanese, a state of panic spread throughout the province, provincial administration collapsing with the flight of officials to safety. Isolated groups of militarists paused for a sufficient length of time to assume complete power in certain districts, plundered and looted, and then followed the government to the south. In other areas, rascals and opportunists assumed the role of local dictators, bled the people and passed to fresh fields, giving place to others of similar type. Pro-Japanese elements infiltrated, spreading a net of political intrigue and preparing the ground for occupation by the Japanese.

Following closely on the heels of the Japanese occupational forces came Chinese puppet officials of the new administration. The melting-pot of war had brought to the top the scum of the country, loose-living rascals and adventurers, and it was they who now formed the link between the Chinese people, the farmers and peasants, factory workers and industrialists, teachers and students, merchants and labourers, and their conquerors, the Japanese.

Graft and corruption, murder and blackmail, thievery and rape flourished side by side to an extent hitherto unknown throughout the centuries of Chinese history.

It was not long before the first signs of active resistance became apparent. Here and there, throughout the province, military men with the courage of their convictions began to gather around them groups of patriots who, fired by anti-Japanese propaganda and the inalienable desire to protect their soil and livelihood, were anxious to join in active resistance. These military leaders, hard-bitten and adventurous men, were for the most part local Garrison Commanders serving under General Han. To assume that the motives of these men were based purely on patriotic ideals would be entirely erroneous. Soldiers of many years' standing, they had seen innumerable phases of Chinese politics, switching their allegiance from one war-lord to another : here to better their financial position, there with the prospect of an influential and lucrative post, on other occasions for sentimental reasons to help an old friend. Their reaction to the current crisis was one of "wait and see" rather than of immediate flight. Perhaps the situation could be turned to their advantage and at the same time enhance their reputation as patriots. But this situation differed from previous ones inasmuch as all had a genuine hatred of the Japanese and a knowledge of what to expect from first-hand experience gained during the occupation of Manchuria and the subsequent activities of the Japanese in the administration of that area.

News filtered through to Yu-min that an old friend of the family and a native of Changyi, Wang Shang-chih, was recruiting and training a resistance unit some hundred miles to the north-west at the garrison town of Loling. Wang Shang-chih was an old hand at the game. After graduation from school he entered the National Government's Huang P'u Military Academy, but was dismissed from this institution on political grounds before graduation, whereupon he entered General Feng Yu-hsiang's Officers' Training School from which he graduated and subsequently held the position of Company Commander under General Feng. The outbreak of the Manchurian "incident" found him in the north-eastern provinces and he immediately joined a force of guerrillas and operated against the Japanese for two years. As the Japanese consolidated their control over Manchuria, the unit with which he was fighting was forced to disband and, together with his personal followers, he moved into Shantung, where his soldiers were absorbed into Governor Han's provincial army and were retained at the garrison town of Loling. Wang himself retired. With the Japanese attack on North China and the subsequent collapse of organised resistance, he decided to get back into the business, and, gathering his old retainers about him, established himself at Loling.

As an influential member of the "Ch'ing Pang", one of the most powerful secret societies, he soon found himself surrounded by volunteers, men and women, young and old, all anxious to take some part in opposing the Japanese aggression. With the collapse of provincial authority and the retreat of the government forces, the people, bewildered and shorn of leadership, eagerly supported Wang. Soldiers, deserted by their officers, arrived daily with what arms and ammunition they could collect, neighbouring garrisons sent word of their desire to co-operate, and young farmers volunteered for training, bringing with them an assortment of the most antiquated rifles and muzzle-loading flintlocks, spears and cutlasses.

The original garrison of some one hundred men became instructors, working from dawn to dusk, drilling and coercing the "lao pai hsing", or the "old hundred names", as the farmer-peasants were called, into some semblance of military discipline.

By the time Yu-min had arrived, Loling vas an armed camp with a force of over four hundred regular soldiers and one thousand militia in course of training. Wang was delighted to have Yu-min with him and they spent several weeks in planning and discussing the organisation of this resistance movement.

Returning to Changyi, Yu-min lost no time in spreading the news of the commencement of armed resistance, recruiting and soliciting funds from the local merchants. In the mean-time, an additional unit of resistance had been formed to the south of Changyi by another old and tried military man, Yang Hsiu-feng — he also was a native of Changyi. Already over sixty, he had served as a commander under the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi in the Imperial Cavalry, and as such had opposed the revolutionary forces of 1911. He later gravitated to the

north-eastern provinces and Mongolia, but he too had left Manchuria after the Japanese occupation, and, suffering from T.B., retired to his native homestead to lead a quiet and simple life. He was much respected by his former followers and was particularly popular with the rank and file of his soldiers, whom he treated with a kindness seldom to be found in a military man. In spite of his age and failing health, he had been persuaded by his former subordinates to take up the sword again, and found no lack of support.

Yu-min stayed with Yang for a couple of weeks and before leaving had arrived at an understanding of mutual support and co-operation between these two resistance units. Greatly pleased at this, his first achievement in the political field, he returned to Loling. He felt at last that he was beginning to find his feet ; his most cherished hope of armed resistance was materialising ; he had shown himself to have a competent and in political affairs, and finally, his wife would soon be presenting him with a second child — that it would be a son, he did not doubt.

Organisation at Loling proceeded apace with almost 3000 troops now under training. (Every effort was made to contact and effect liaison between Loling and other independent units in northern Shantung.) Well-planned but cautious attacks had already been made on puppet forces with the main object of augmenting the supply of arms and ammunition.

The lull in the Japanese operations after the capture of the capital city of Tsinan enabled the few remaining officials in the south of the province to pause in their flight, and, taking stock of the position, they officially appointed Wang Shang chih as Commander-in-Chief of the "Second Guerrilla Area" and then, having convinced themselves that they had done all in their power to organise resistance behind the Japanese lines, continued on their way to the as yet unmolested areas in the south. To the Chinese, to whom titles are as gold braid to the armies of the South American republics; this was almost as stimulating as a train-load of ammunition.

Wang Shang-chih was now officially recognised as the leader of guerrilla operations in north-east Shantung and as such could command the loyalty and co-operation of all forces within this area. Shortly after this he appointed Yang Hsiufeng as second in command and Yu-min as his Chief of Staff. As Commander-in-Chief of the Second Guerrilla Area, Wang had something like 20,000 men under his command, loosely scattered through this area, and Yu-min was sent on a mission throughout the command in an endeavour to assess the position and to consolidate and ensure the allegiance of the scattered forces.

Letter to Weihsien Camp from Commander Wang Shang chih dated 4 May, 1944

Beleaguered British and Americans
Greetings to all. The dwarf islanders, who as brigands and robbers have upset the order of the world, and whose brutality my countrymen have first felt, as war and calamity spread widely and human sacrifice became cruel beyond any comparison in human history, without taking account of virtue and measuring their strength, dared to make enemies of your countries, so that you have met with great misfortune, and have been robbed of your livelihood and happiness.
We can well imagine that your life in Hades must reach the limit of inhuman cruelty. As I write this, I tear the roots of my hair.
The Allies are now in the Pacific, in South East Asia and on the mainland of China, where they have attacked with great success. I beg of you to let your spirits rise.
My division at the present moment is able to release you, snatching you from the tiger's mouth. But the territory we control is small and restricted. I cannot guarantee your safety for a long period.
If you will request your consuls to send aeroplanes after your release to pick you up, and take you away to the rear, then my division can certainly save you. Regarding this matter, I am asking Miss Wang Juilan to find some way of getting into touch with you, and to make arrangements.
I respectfully hope that you will be able to carry this out, and send you all my good wishes,
Wang Shang chih, 33rd year of the Republic, fifth month, fourth day.

The Japanese, getting wind of this resistance movement, decided to investigate, and dispatched a force of three hundred troops in the direction of Loling. Wang's intelligence brought him news of this expedition and immediately plans were made to ambush the Japanese column. Within a few hours a motley crowd of soldiers and militia had been assembled and, armed with rifles, flintlocks, cutlasses and hand-grenades, set off at dusk to meet the Japanese.

Within a week Wang had returned to his Headquarters. Although perturbed by the high casualties, he had been successful in so far as the Japanese had retreated to their garrison, taking with them eleven cartloads of dead and wounded. This had cost Wang over four hundred casualties but he had made a gain in armaments, thanks to his policy of conserving rifles by the use of cutlasses and hand-grenades.

While the force was still licking its wounds, intelligence brought news of six hundred Japanese troops, including cavalry and light field-guns, en route for Loling. Unprepared to meet this reprisal, Wang ordered immediately a general move southwards, not only of the troops but of the whole civilian population.

Every possible means of conveyance was brought into use: mule-carts, ox-carts, horses and donkeys, wheelbarrows and bicycles, all loaded to capacity with grain. Women hurriedly seized supplies of food, a few cherished possessions, some clothes and bedding and, herding children, pigs and goats before them, left their homes and all they valued to the Japanese, who, enraged to find but an empty village, burned it to the

ground, together with the wounded, who had been unable to leave, and the few elderly people left to care for them.

Considerably reduced in numbers and burdened with women and children, Wang Shang-chih was in no position to offer resistance, a fact well realised by neighbouring puppet officials who had long been jealous of his growing power and prestige. Seizing this opportunity they forced him south of the railway.

Jealous for his independence and "face", Wang was not prepared to turn to his allied units for support. He was confident that, given the opportunity, he could successfully reorganise. For the next few months they moved from one district to another, eking out a meagre existence; food was scarce and funds short. The Japanese influence was growing and the newly organised Chinese puppet troops, arrogant and ruthless with their newly acquired power, took every opportunity to bring pressure on this roving band.

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Part Three

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNINGS OF RESISTANCE

DURING this interval Yu-min spent long periods with Yang's unit, which continued to expand. It was almost as though he considered Wang Shangchih's cause to be a lost one, but in spite of hardships Wang began once again to make headway. Slowly at first he gathered recruits. Dissatisfied puppet soldiers and police joined his ranks, and as his force grew in numbers, so his influence extended amongst neighbouring units. Agreements of military co-operation were reaffirmed, and by the interchange of armed detachments between himself and other leaders, his position and influence were greatly strengthened. It was not long before his activities, particularly south of the railway, again made him the target not only of the Japanese and their puppet forces, but also of the Communists, who considered that he was encroaching on their sphere of influence. Harried by repeated Japanese attacks of which the Communists invariably took advantage to press him in the flank, he lost many of his strategic positions. Large numbers of his troops were killed, and as his strength lessened, others began to desert. Lack of adequate arms and ammunition was the principal cause of his inability to meet his aggressors successfully.

Fostered by Communists, intrigue amongst his troops at one of his most important bases resulted in a split and armed conflict, which necessitated his withdrawal from south of the railway. The deciding factor in putting down this insurrection was probably the reinforcements sent to assist him by Yang and Yu-min. Wang, with his remaining force of about seven thousand troops, now removed his Headquarters north of the railway, but it was only a matter of months before the Japanese, with vastly superior armaments, completely routed his unit. Again reduced to but a thousand or so followers and with practically no ammunition, Wang was faced with his third problem of reorganisation within two years.

It was about this time that Yu-min proposed that Wang and Yang should combine forces and move into their native district of Changyi. There, he argued, they were well known and would receive the active support of the country people, which was the basic essential in the successful operation of any guerrilla force. He realised also that if they were to survive, something in the nature of a more permanent and closely-knit organisation must be achieved. It was agreed that Yu-min should return to Changyi and investigate the possibility of removing their Headquarters to that area. Within two months the obvious support that Yu-min had obtained persuaded both Wang and Yang to move their combined forces, and a thorough reorganisation was under-taken.

A dispatch was received from Chungking officially designating the unit as the Fourth Mobile Column of the Shantung–Kiangsu War Zone and Wang Shang-chih was confirmed in his position as Commander. Yang was appointed Deputy Commander and Yu-min was made responsible for the administration of financial affairs. From now on he took an increasingly important part in the organisation. Well known through the district, he acted as liaison between the farmers, the gentry and the military, and being on good terms with the leaders of the various units comprising this resistance army, he was able to maintain a state of co-operation that gradually knit them into one.

Once again recruiting and reorganisation had brought their total forces up to five thousand, but as yet no attempts were made to interfere with the activities of the Japanese or the puppet forces stationed at nearby railway garrisons. All efforts were concentrated upon training and procuring supplies of ammunition, which were purchased through the Puppet troops and from any other available quarter.

Basing his arguments on past experiences, Yu-min advocated the establishment of their own ammunition factories, and in this he was strongly supported by Li Tze-lien an honours graduate of Tsinghua University and an ardent member of the more enlightened group of which Yu-min was the leader. Although each regiment had already its own repair shop for arms, Wang Shang-chih vetoed the establishment of actual factories on the grounds of immobility. He pressed for more funds and the purchase of greater quantities of arms and ammunition from unoccupied China, the puppet troops and even from the Japanese.

Under Japanese occupation, the Chinese National currency in North China was declared illegal tender and was replaced by the Japanese-issued Federal Reserve Bank notes. But although Chinese National currency was forced out of circulation in the larger cities and the railway towns, it was still current in the interior. As Chief of the Financial Department, one of Yu-min's first steps was to print and circulate "resistance money" which he exchanged for Chinese National currency, silver dollars and gold bars at specified rates of exchange. At the same time he issued a proclamation prohibiting the use of any currency but the newly issued "resistance money". As the funds in the exchequer grew, so an increasing number of purchasing agents were dispatched to obtain ammunition,

but, still dissatisfied with the results, Yu-min continued to press for the opening of their own munitions and arms factories and finally won his point.

Under cover of darkness, equipment and raw materials were smuggled into the area. Skilled workmen were recruited and within a few weeks several small factories were operating. Following this successful move, steps were taken to enlarge the local cotton-weaving industry. Each household was required to produce a specified amount of the coarse cloth which was accepted against a rebate in taxation. Dye works and tailoring establishments made this cloth into uniforms for the troops and a large number of shoe factories were opened. Within a year a sound basis of self-economy had been laid. Nor had Yu-min neglected education. With the assistance of his former colleagues, primary schools were opened in all the larger villages.

Yu-min's increasing scope of activities forced him to rely more and more upon Li Tze-lien, but he was never willing to release completely his hold on any particular organisation with which he had been connected, not so much from a reluctance to relinquish his personal powers, as from his lack of faith in the ability of anyone but himself to do the work to his satisfaction.

Till now he had taken no active part in the actual control of military affairs, which he had been willing to concede to Wang Shang-chih and Yang. Realising that his lack of practical military experience was one of his weak points, he now pressed Wang to give him command of a regiment. As the strength of the unit increased Wang realised that sooner or later it would not only be necessary but also advisable to split the present three regiments into smaller units, and during this rearrangement Yu-min persuaded Wang to make him Commander of the new 10th regiment. Intent upon establishing himself in the military field, Yu-min now handed over a great deal of the organisational work to Li Tze-lien and other of his associates.

Closely connected as Yu-min was with the internal organisation, he made ample use of his position and connections to see that his own particular regiment came first in both arms and equipment, with the natural result that new recruits were more anxious to join the 10th than any other regiment, and it was not long before this unit was superior in every way. This led to a certain amount of jealousy amongst the other Commanders and their troops. Inexperienced in military affairs, Yu-min engaged the services of older and more experienced officers to train and lead his companies. At heart a puritan, he enforced strict discipline, and although his troops found this irksome after the free and easy life they had been used to, the advantages that Yu-min's position secured in the way of additional equipment and supplies more than made up for the dull routine enforced.

The Japanese had made two rather half-hearted attempts to mop up the Changyi district, but instead of engaging then Wang Shang-chih had successfully evaded any direct clash by moving completely away from the district until the Japanese had returned to their garrison. Intelligence had given them sufficient warning to disperse the industrial organisations; materials and machines were buried and the staffs scattered.

The Communists were an ever-present worry. They had their Headquarters for north-eastern Shantung to the east in the Laiyang district, and the area occupied by the Fourth Mobile Column lay directly across their communication lines with their Headquarters in north-western Shantung, and for this reason they were continually exerting pressure on the Fourth from the east, north and north-west.

Close relations had been established between the Fourth and the guerrilla leader directly to the east, and these were further cemented when, the latter being attacked by the Communists, Yu-min's regiment was sent by Wang Shang-chih to reinforce his neighbour, and their combined efforts inflicted a smashing defeat on the Communists. Encouraged by this success, Yu-min persuaded Wang Shang-chih to agree to a general all-out drive against the Communists to ensure that they were pushed back to a desirable distance. Over a period of several months Yu-min occupied large areas of Communist territory, but the guerrilla leader to the east whom Yu-min had so recently assisted, soon became jealous of the success of the Fourth, and by misrepresenting the position to the Central Government succeeded in having orders issued from Chungking instructing Wang Shang-chih to hand over this newly acquired territory to him and withdraw. Reluctantly Wang did so and within a few weeks it was again lost to the Communists. To the north-west the Fourth retained their gains of Communist territory. As a result of this drive, their position as regards the Communists became stabilised for the time being on a basis of live-and-let-live.

Attention was now focused on the Japanese. Cautiously at first, raiding expeditions were sent into the Japanese-controlled areas to the smaller railway stations and garrisons. Accurate information was always first obtained as to the opposition that might be expected, and the attacking force was invariably large enough to ensure a successful conclusion to the expedition. By means of these hit-and-run attacks, both the material and the morale of the Fourth were greatly improved.

Yu-min's drive and determination were largely responsible for the expansion of the area. By sheer purpose and will-power, he had gradually built up for himself a reputation in the military field. He was by no means brilliant as a strategist, but by his control over his men, strict discipline and personal participation in any

action undertaken, he made for himself and his regiment a name for bravery and invincibility unequalled by any other of the regiments. It was therefore not surprising that the other Regimental Commanders became jealous and somewhat apprehensive of Yu-min's increasing influence. Wang Shang-chih, who had given Yu-min a more or less free hand, was now forced to reconsider the matter and decided that Yu-min's regiment, in order to reduce it to the comparative strength of the others, should be divided into three separate regiments under newly appointed Commanders. Yang Hsiu-feng, already advanced in years and not in good health, had been unable to maintain an active position as Deputy Commander and so Wang Shang-chih appointed Yu-min as Co-Vice-Commander with Yang.

Yu-min took pains to see that the pick of the troops from his original 10th regiment were all transferred to one of the three new regiments over which he continued to maintain his command through his Regimental Commander. In addition to his new post as Vice-Commander, he concurrently held the position of Chief of the Political Department.

By the end of 1940, the name of the Fourth had become well known and respected throughout Shantung. An efficient military machine had been achieved, and to maintain this a Civil Government had now come into being, controlling the collection of taxes, the supervision of agriculture and the pro, motion of necessary war industries, anti-Japanese propaganda and the educational policy.

In the spring of 1941 Commander Wang Shang-chih, who had long been suffering from severe ulcers of the stomach became very seriously ill and, in great pain, was confined to his room for many weeks. Affairs were now administered by Yu-min, Yang and Li Tze-lien.

Wang's health continued to deteriorate; a Chinese specialist, called from the capital, diagnosed acute ulceration, necessitating an immediate major operation, the only competent surgeon being a Japanese specialist attached to the Tsinan Municipal Hospital. In the guise of a wealthy old farmer, Wang was taken to Tsinan and successfully operated upon by the Japanese specialist — the records show that a considerable portion of his intestines was removed and replaced by those belonging to a pig!

For a time it seemed doubtful if he would recover. This news brought some consternation to the camp and, from the many meetings and discussions which were held, it became evident that in the event of its being necessary to nominate a successor, the most popular choice would be Li Tze-lien. This came as a great disappointment to Yu -min, who considered himself to be the obvious person to succeed Wang Shang-chih. With this unexpected turn of events, Yu-min, who had advocated that Wang Shang-chih remain in Tsinan as long as possible to recuperate, now reversed his attitude and insisted that he be brought back as soon as possible, knowing very well that when Wang Shang-chih returned, he would entrust him with the management of affairs and, as long as he lived, Yu-min would have the necessary opportunity of consolidating his personal power and position.

Information had leaked out that Wang Shang-chih was in Tsinan. He was removed at once from the hospital to a friend's house. As soon as he was able to walk, he donned the uniform of a high-ranking puppet official and boarded the train for Weihsien. At home once more, Wang Shang-chih retired for a period of recuperation, leaving the administration in the hands of Yu-min.

One of Yu-min's first moves was to persuade Wang Shang-chih of the necessity of having a personal representative and contact man in the war-time capital of Chungking, and recommended Li Tze-lien. To this Wang agreed and Yu-min, much relieved, felt it was now merely a matter of waiting until Wang's death before he automatically took over his position.

Contrary to expectations, however, Wang Shang-chih, after a period of convalescence, showed remarkable recuperative powers and, although he no longer took any active part in engagements, again took up the reins. As an old military hand he had the respect and allegiance of all the Regimental Commanders, with whom he was on the best of terms. He had always been a light smoker of opium and since his illness he took more regularly to his pipe as a sedative against his still painful ailment. He encouraged his subordinate officers in this habit, thereby feeling that he could maintain a stronger hold over them; nor was he averse to their whoring and gambling.

Encouraged by his successful raids and the ineffectual attacks from the Japanese, Wang gradually disregarded the first principle of a guerrilla force and, somewhat under the influence of the opium-smoking, whoring and gambling hangers-on, drifted into a false sense of security.

Selecting the village of Suncheng, he started to create out of this well-situated hamlet a capital befitting the area now under his control. Lying at the foot of the San Hu hill, which had always been the pivot of their mobile Headquarters, the village was admirably situated for defence. Old disused quarries in the neighbourhood were once again worked and slabs of granite of enormous proportions were soon being hauled into place to form the bastions and walls of the fortress, which was to be the residential Headquarters. In-side the walls large sections of the villagers' cottages were pulled down to make room for the new mud-brick government offices, residential quarters and meeting-halls. A special rest-house was built for visiting officials. New shops were opened, where all the produce of Japanese manufacture from the occupied

areas could be bought. Houses of amusement with girls from the cities opened at a discreet distance from the official quarter.

By the end of 1942 the Civil Government and the Military Headquarters moved into Suncheng, retaining Regimental Headquarters only at outside garrisons. Yu-min, from the very beginning of this venture, had been against the move, and would never allow his own regiment to be stationed within the capital, although he himself had to spend a great deal of his time there. He strongly opposed the degenerate tendency that was now being shown by this resistance army and took every opportunity to try and break up and decentralise both the civil and military control.

In the spring of 1943 the Japanese, who for almost half a year had suffered attacks here and there from the Fourth without retaliation, sent a force of five hundred Japanese, accompanied by over a thousand puppet troops, on a three-day mopping-up attack, but finding unexpected opposition, they retired without reaching Suncheng, and with the intelligence that this force had returned to their garrison, the state of alarm was lifted and life in the Suncheng capital again returned to normal.

Some weeks later, in the beginning of May, intelligence reported a large Japanese force moving north from the railway zone. Reliable reports from Wang's spies attached to the Japanese Headquarters indicated a concerted drive against the Communists and, confident that the Japanese would by-pass his area, Wang did not consider it necessary to alert his troops.

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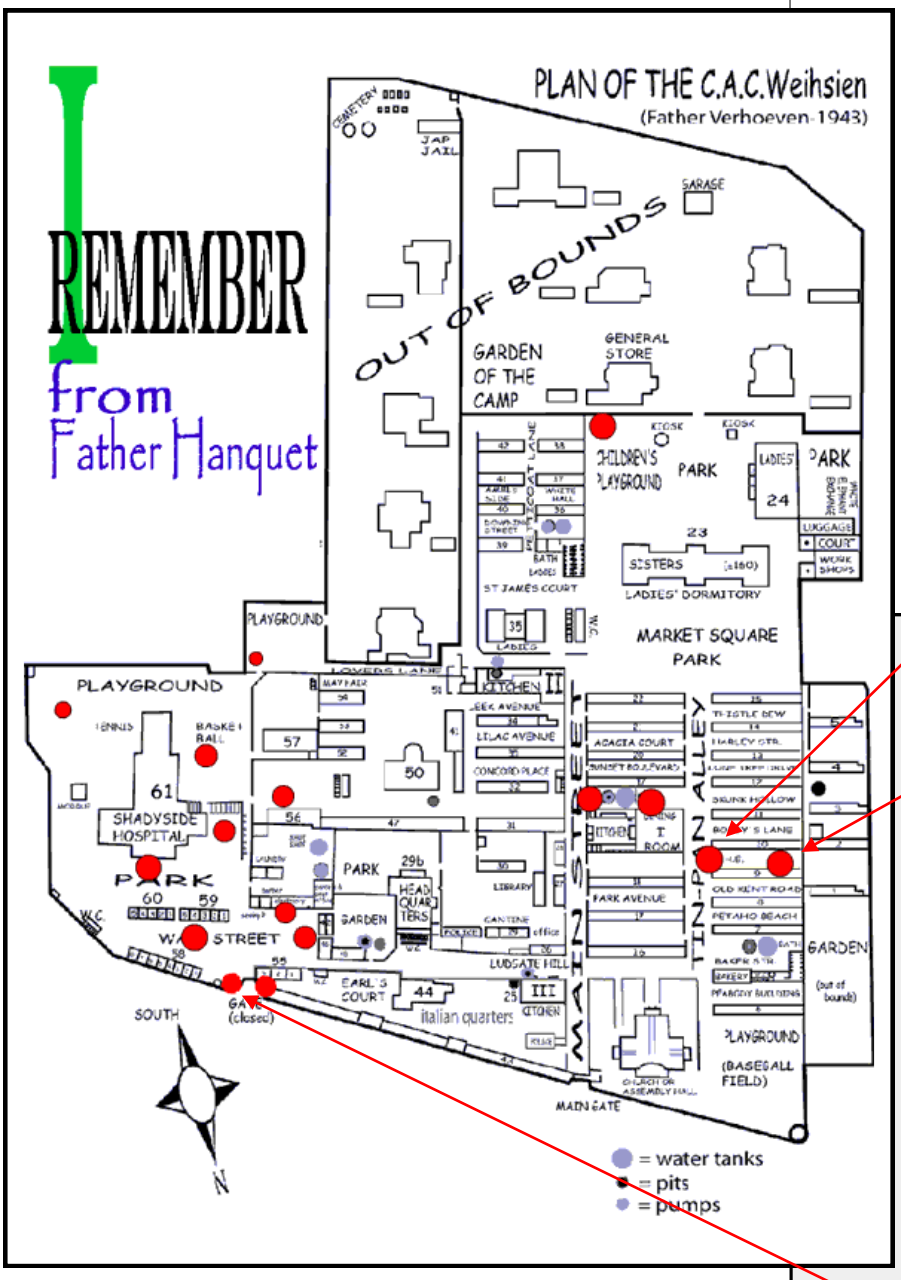
June 1944 to August 1945

CHAPTER I

ESCAPE



ONE Saturday morning towards the end of May 1943, we received a number of Japanese English-language newspapers which the Japs let us have from time to time, and there, on the middle page of one issue, was a half-column account of a successful Japanese mopping-up operation against this very unit with whom we were negotiating. It claimed that Japanese planes had completely demolished the Headquarters of these "bandit troops" whose forces had been routed by a Japanese expeditionary force. Ammunition and clothing depots had been destroyed and the leader of this band, Wang Shang-chih, captured.

This at least seemed to prove beyond doubt the existence of such a unit. Resigned to yet another failure, we were amazed when a few days later we received a letter from Mr. Chen. He apologised for the delay due to the large-scale Japanese attack on their Headquarters at Suncheng, during which their Commander, Wang Shang-chih, had been captured and taken as a prisoner to Tsingtao. The new Commander, **Wang Yu-min**, was still entirely in agreement with our plans and if we would advise them of the date on which we proposed to leave the camp, the necessary preparations would be made and plans communicated to us in due course.

We consulted Tommy Wade as to the most suitable place to get over the wall, and it was decided that a small watch-tower in the middle of the west wall was the ideal spot. An indentation in the line of the wall obscured this section from the direct rays of the searchlight on the north-west corner of the athletic field. It was, however, exposed to the search-light on the watch-tower at the southern end of the wall in the Japanese residential section of the camp. The guard was

I remember that I was on watch here. It was on a late evening in June 1944 when Hummel and Tipton escaped from the Weihsien Concentration Camp.

I remember that is was from this part of the wall that Tipton and Hummel disappeared into the night ---

I remember that it was behind this part of the wall that I waited for Tipton and Hummel's probable return --- should their escape had gone wrong. Fortunately, they succeeded and I put the ladder and rope away before the Japanese guards saw anything.

I waited for Tipton and Hummel --- We were, however, very anxious to avoid any mishaps, and had previously arranged with them for a recuperation procedure if ever they missed the "contact" at the scheduled location. That is why, between 6 and 7 in the morning, the following day, I had to be waiting for them near the boundary limits not very far away from our bloc n°56 at a place, behind the wall that was invisible from the watch towers. I hid myself just behind the morgue ready with a thick strong rope. If ever I heard the cry of the owl, I had to thrust the rope over the wall to help them back into the compound.

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changed at 9 P.M. and it was customary for the new guard to make a tour of inspection along the alley-ways in this section after coming on duty. This usually took about ten minutes. During those ten minutes we would have to make our get-away. It was essential that there be no moon, but on the other hand we felt that a moon would be of considerable assistance to us once we had got clear of the camp ; such ideal conditions would prevail on the 9th and 10th of June, which would give us exactly one week in which to prepare. Having decided on these two alternative clays, we replied to Mr. Chen and advised him that the rendezvous would be at a thickly-wooded cemetery a little over a mile north-east of the camp between nine and midnight on the 9th or 10th of June.

The suspense of the ensuing week was unbearable. The knowledge that within a few days we would have finished with this futile existence made us pity the other internees who would have to endure it for the duration ; the excitement and the anticipation made us long to tell the world. Each day passed like a week and each night a month of rest-less tossing and turning. As part of our plan to help exonerate our room-mates, we started to sleep outside, as many people did during the summer months. This would at least clear them of the blame for not reporting our absence if our beds were found empty at the ten o'clock lights-out. I resigned from my cooking job and, having worked for four months on a stretch, asked the Labour Committee for a few days' rest. We did all we could to make our absence as inconspicuous as possible.

On the evening of 8th June we received the reply. Every-thing had been arranged, a posse of plain-clothes soldiers would meet us at the appointed place and escort us to a point two miles to the north, where a mounted detachment would be awaiting us with ponies; we should be at their Head-quarters by dawn. A postscript was added, requesting that we bring a typewriter with us, as the only one the unit possessed had been destroyed in the recent bombing, and a watch and a fountain pen for the correspondent were also required!

There was little more to be done. We went to see McLaren and told him we would be leaving the following night. Although he agreed, he did not seem now to be so enthusiastic about the scheme. The next morning he asked us to go over to see him again. He wanted us to call it off. The new Chief of the Japanese Guards, who had only just taken up his position, was an unknown quantity; he appeared to be rather a tough customer. There would doubtless be reprisals. We had discussed this angle long ago and it had been decided that any consequences visited upon the internees would be more than outweighed by the advantages derived from established connections with a reliable pro-Chungking unit. But since then this change in the Chief of the Guards had been made and McLaren was not now in favour of the scheme. That afternoon we had a further talk with him.

Arthur and I felt that the arrangements had gone too far for us to back out now unless we wished to lose connection with this unit altogether, and in the end Mac eventually admitted that if he were in our position, he would most probably go. He left it to us to decide, on the understanding that if we did go, then we must arrange with either Wade or de Jaegher to let him know once we had got clear of the wall, so that he would at least be prepared for the rampages of the Chief when he got to hear about it the following morning.

That evening I told my room-mates; they of course had been aware that some such move was in the air. I knew it would put them in an awkward position the next morning when we were found to be missing and it was only fair to give them warning. Arthur Hummel also told one of his room-mates and it was agreed that if they could get by with-out reporting our absence at roll-call, they would not do so till later in the morning.

By eight, Tommy Wade and his scouts were out on the job on the west wall, checking the activities of the guards.

At eight-thirty I pulled on "the Bishop's Jaegers" and a black Chinese jacket, and joined Arthur in the vicinity of the wall. The guard was changed but he did not leave his post for the customary walk around. We waited anxiously — eventually he strolled away, but there were two people sitting outside their room directly facing the spot from which we intended to leave. By the time they were out of the way, the scouts had lost track of the guard! We decided to take a chance. In a moment we were up in the tower and had let ourselves carefully down the wall till our feet touched a pile of conveniently placed bricks. Tommy Wade followed with a small stool. From the stool I stepped inadvertently on to Tommy's bald head instead of his shoulder, and with a hand on the post of the electrified fence, vaulted over. Arthur followed and our

CAMP WALL FROM THE OUTSIDE, SHOWING SEARCH-LIGHT, WATCH-TOWERS AND THE ELECTRIFIED BARBED-WIRE FENCE OVER WHICH HUMMEL AND THE AUTHOR ESCAPED

knapsacks were thrown to us. We saw Tommy on his way back up the wall and then made a dash for a graveyard some fifty yards away and flung ourselves behind the nearest grave.

A pause to collect our breath, and we made another dash which took us out of range of the searchlights, and, taking our bearings from the camp, we headed directly north over ploughed fields, through wheat crops, stumbling over ditches and sunken roads until we reached the stream that flowed north of the camp. Wading across this, we headed in the direction of the cemetery.

The moon was rising. In less than half an hour we could make out the dark mass of trees within the cemetery and by the time we reached the walls there was sufficient light from the moon to see quite distinctly. We followed a path that led directly to the elaborate gateway surmounted by a triple-tiered roof and supported by carved stone pillars thrown into deep relief by the moonlight. It appeared to be deserted. We scouted round the wall and turning the south corner facing the camp, we saw the glow of a cigarette and a group of figures huddled against the wall in the shadows. A figure detached itself and approached us; as he drew nearer; we saw he had a pistol directed against us. We stood still, away from the shadow of the wall, in the moonlight. Approaching, he asked who we were and we replied: "Friends." He peered closely at our faces and lowering his pistol, called to the others, "Yes! It is they," whereupon the other four gathered around us, smiling and shaking our hands in an enthusiastic welcome. One of them unrolled a couple of triangular white cloth banners on which was inscribed in English: "Welcome the British and American representatives! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! "They invited us to sit down and, producing cigarettes, started to question us, apparently in no hurry to move. Having discussed our family status, the camp, the war and the high cost of living, one of them suggested that we might as well get along.

Like us, they were all dressed in black, and each carried a cocked German Mauser. One of them went on ahead about fifty yards, three of them kept with us and the fifth followed about fifty yards behind ; we were evidently making for another rendezvous where we were to meet the sixth. There, we thought, we should no doubt meet the mounted detachment. We walked for three or four miles in a north-easterly direction, skirting some villages and passing through others to the accompaniment of yelping dogs, but this did not seem to worry our guards. Once or twice, on a signal from the scout ahead, we hid behind a clump of bushes or pancaked in the grass. Finally we came to a halt outside a small village into which one of the men proceeded. Here there was some delay. We gathered from the conversation that we were to pick up someone here, who from their remarks was "an opium-smoking son of a bitch". In about an hour the guide returned and we moved on. Skirting around the village, we climbed an embankment which I recognised as the Weihsien–Chefoo motor road. From the shadows of a small wayside hovel we were joined by a tall thin man, slow of speech and equally slow of action. He was immediately greeted by all hands with a string of abuse relating to his mother's and grandmother's reproductive organs for producing such a turtle's egg who would wear a white coat on a night mission.

Little perturbed, he retired to the back of the hut and reappeared with a bicycle and accompanied by an old man with a wheelbarrow.

The Chinese wheelbarrow differs from ours in that the wheel is much larger and is placed in the middle of the frame rather than at the forward end. A framework is built over this wheel, thus forming two bench-like seats on either side. Politely we were invited to sit, one on either side. We explained that we were not in the least tired and could well wait until we met the ponies. After much argument we gave in and, with our knapsacks, settled ourselves on the padded seats and took our place in the procession, swearing by all the gods that word of this must never get back to camp. Escape in a wheelbarrow, when we should have been galloping across country on ponies accompanied by a platoon of mounted guerrillas! It was not long before we were walking; riding in a wheelbarrow is even more degrading than being pulled in a rickshaw.

By dawn we had travelled about twenty miles and were approaching the first outpost of the unit to which we were going. We stopped a quarter of a mile from the village, and one of the guides went ahead to give the password to the advance sentry. The village at that hour was deserted except for sentries and groups of soldiers asleep in doorways. We were taken into one of the bigger courtyards and ushered into a small dark room with the usual brick bed or "k'ang" taking up most of the room. We had tea and cakes, a bowl full of poached eggs and some Chinese bread, and then slept for a couple of hours. By eight we were again on our way accompanied by our thin friend and the plain-clothes guards, this time all equipped with bicycles. Arthur and I were adorned with panama-style straw hats, both too small but apparently the fashionable thing amongst itinerant tradesmen, for whom it was hoped we would be taken; we were also supplied with dark glasses but there was little that could be done to disguise our western noses! We pedalled and pushed over sandy roads, keeping mainly to the smaller side-paths. At one point we again crossed the Weihsien–Chefoo motor road, and only just in time! Hardly had we done so when a Japanese truck passed loaded with soldiers. From the slow pace at which they were going and the attention they were paying to the surrounding country, they appeared to be looking for something or someone. We just prayed it wasn't us and kept on pedalling in what we hoped was a nonchalant manner. As the sun mounted we became more and more hot and exhausted. At three in the afternoon we

were still pedalling, but our goal, a distant hill, came nearer as the road twisted and turned through the wheat fields. By four-thirty we had arrived at a large village surrounded by barbed-wire entanglements, a moat and a huge mud wall.

Sentries saluted smartly as we passed over a crude wooden drawbridge and through the massive wooden gates. Our guide led us to a large reception-room where we were given hot towels and tea. We were surrounded by a curious but friendly group and inundated with questions and congratulations on our successful escape. As the word spread that we had arrived, so more people came. The Commander was advised of our arrival and he instructed that we should be taken to the reception-rooms set apart for visitors, where we could rest; he would call upon us later in the evening.

A couple of orderlies preceded us with our knapsacks and we were accompanied by a Mr. Chang, who was under the impression that he could speak English. We were shown into a large room, sparsely furnished but clean. More hot towels, tea and cigarettes and then Mr. Chang left us with the suggestion that we should rest. By the time we awoke, it was dark. Again more hot towels — and we sat down to a table laden with steaming dishes and enjoyed the best meal that we had had since leaving Peking. Later someone came to us and said that the Commander had no time to see us that evening, adding in an undertone to Chang words to the effect that he was disappointed with being sent " only a school teacher and a business man " when he needed engineers, mechanics and electricians; there was considerable discussion and then we were told to collect our gear and be ready to move.

Led by Chang and a couple of orderlies, we left Head quarters. After walking for about half an hour we entered a small village. Twisting and turning through many alleys we at last climbed over a broken wall at the back of a large one-storied house and entered through the window. It was pitch dark inside and smelled musty. One of the orderlies lit a candle, revealing three or four wooden-frame trestle beds completely bare, a table, here and there a window with torn paper, others with no paper at all. An unpleasant contrast to the reception-rooms at the headquarters.

The orderlies returned with the headman of the village and a bundle of cotton-padded quilts, two for each of us, and a round hard pillow stuffed with wheat husks. It was quite warm and we stripped to our underpants and bedded down for the night, but not for long! Within half an hour we were being tormented with lice and fleas. After hours of tossing, turning and scratching, worn out by the unequal struggle, we slept and did not wake until noon the next day, when, feeling stiff but rested, we took stock of our surroundings. We were in a long narrow room; with the windows bare of paper and with the door open, there was plenty of air. There was nothing in the room but our three beds and the one table. Mr. Chang was drowsing amongst quilts which from their appearance must have been as bug-infested as ours. When we returned from a look around the courtyard which adjoined the village ancestral temple, Chang was putting on his clothes. He apologised for the inadequacy of the accommodation but said that during the day this would be remedied. The Commander wished us to remain hidden here until the hue and cry, bound to be raised by the Japanese at our escape, had died down. Very few people knew that we were here and of course we would not be allowed to go out for the time being. We had only to ask him for anything that we needed and he would get it if it could be obtained.

We were quite content to spend the first two days eating and sleeping. The food was good, plain Chinese country fare and there was plenty of it. On the table stood a wicker container full of hot, steamed white bread, and with this we ate two or three kinds of vegetables which had been fried, with chopped meat, in peanut oil. The northern Chinese are essentially a wheat-eating people and bread, in one form or another, is their staple diet. If in good circumstances, they will eat one or two bowls of vegetables and perhaps a dish of fried meat cubes with their bread; if not, then salted pickles. After dark we accompanied the tall, skeleton-like figure of Mr. Chang for a short walk on the village wall or alongside the river which flowed past the south gate. On first acquaintance he appeared to be rather a charming person; his English was not good, but by combining English with Chinese, we were able to converse freely. He was anxious to talk and answered our numerous questions willingly.

Our first visitor was Mr. Chen, with whom we had corresponded prior to our escape. I do not know quite what we had expected, but whatever it was, he was disappointing, and immediately brought to mind McLaren's remark after he had read his letters: "This man is either a dope fiend or a patriotic maniac." He was dressed in well-cut khaki shorts and stockings and a khaki military shirt over which he wore a light-coloured alpaca jacket, and a panama hat. He was thin to the point of emaciation, his hair was grey and rather thick and he wore a pair of horn-rimmed glasses. His English was good, as we had anticipated it would be from his letters, and he appeared to be genuinely pleased to see us. We thanked him in the name of the camp and for ourselves for the part he had taken in effecting our escape.

"It is nothing," he replied: "I have a great number of foreign friends many of whom are in the camp. Until recently I was employed by the Kailan Mining Administration in Tongshan, but unable to suffer the indignities to which one is exposed in working for the Japanese, I resigned my position and have since devoted my time, energy and money to the furtherance of plans for the rescue of my many friends in Weihsien camp. It is

most dangerous work but I have no doubt that with your assistance we can successfully carry through my scheme. Commander Wang Yu-min is in agreement with my proposals and I shall be leaving for Chungking in a few days to take your report and recommendations to the British and American Embassies."

We spent the rest of the evening, in fact late into the night, trying to convince him of the foolhardiness of such a scheme. It did not take many hours to convince us that he was nothing but an unpractical dreamer of the most fantastic dreams.

We were just wondering how to end this rather useless discussion until such time as we could see Commander Wang Yu-min, when we were interrupted by a penetrating shout from the door. "Report!" said the voice in Chinese, which we later learned to be the recognised method for a soldier to attract the attention of his superior officer. The door was opened to admit two well-built and smartly-turned-out soldiers, armed to the teeth, each with a bandolier of ammunition-clips around the waist, hung on either side with automatic pistols from diagonally-crossed straps over the shoulders, and with a large Mauser in a wooden case on their buttocks. Yet another strap supported a leather dispatch-case. A couple of tooth-brushes stuck into the leather trappings, one on each side of the chest, and a towel looped through the belt completed their kit. They were dressed in dark-grey uniforms of coarse cotton material, cloth shoes and cotton puttees.

Entering the room, they sprang smartly to attention and saluted. In short, business-like sentences one of them announced to Chang that there was an alarm. Word had just been received at Headquarters that Japanese troops were assembling on the border and that Commander Wang Yu-min had instructed him to take us to a certain village where we were to hide and await further orders. We must leave immediately.

Within five minutes we had gathered our possessions and were on our way. We were challenged at the village gate by the local Self-Protection Corps, which we learned was a regular feature of all the villages in which soldiers were not stationed. The Corps was comprised of the able-bodied men of the village who guarded the gates and patrolled the walls awned with flint -locks or crude rifles. As we passed out of the gates, Chang's orderly took the lead, following narrow footpaths across the open country. The night was cloudy and it was hard going over the uneven paths.

We headed south and just before daybreak arrived at another walled village, where we were again challenged. Chang called for the village headman and told him to requisition the best room in the village, and after some consultation he led us through several winding alley -ways to a small courtyard and we were ushered into a room which consisted almost entirely of a large brick bed. The garrulous Mr. Chen was particularly exhausted and, mumbling some excuse, disappeared. After a glass of tea, Chang, Arthur and I wrapped ourselves in the cotton quilts that were folded at the side of the k'ang and went to sleep.

We were awakened by the orderly at about half-past ten with a tray of steaming noodles. After we had eaten, Chang went off to investigate the situation and returned with the news that the Japanese appeared to be heading north-west to attack the Communists. In any case, we were in no danger but we would have to stay in the room, as it was necessary to keep our whereabouts a secret.

Mr. Chen, thoroughly refreshed, was in a very talkative mood. After a couple of hours his enthusiasm waned and he took great pains to explain how seriously ill he had been and how his doctor had prescribed small doses of heroin as the only antidote. Of course he knew it was a foul drug, but, on the other hand what was the use of paying a doctor unless one followed his prescription? Would we excuse him while he took his medicine? Producing a packet of "Three Castles" cigarettes an unheard-of luxury amongst the guerrillas, he offered them round. Rolling the cigarette in his fingers to loosen the tobacco he tapped it on the packet and, producing a small phial from his inner pocket, carefully measured the grains of white powder on to the loose end of the cigarette Holding it vertically so as not to spill any of this precious life-giving drug, he lay down on his back, lit the cigarette and inhaled deeply. Three times he repeated the operation, Arthur and I watched, anxiously expecting some rather startling effect, but nothing happened. The conversation continued, Chen was in excellent form and discussed freely, perhaps rather too freely, certain aspects of guerrilla activities.

After an hour had passed he informed us that this damp weather was extremely bad for his health and necessitated added precautions, whereupon he repeated the treatment.

We noticed that old Chang was watching the proceedings with great interest, never removing his beady eyes from the precious phial. Soon he too began to talk about his health and to complain of the pain he suffered in the damp weather. Unable to resist any longer, he eventually asked Chen for a little medicine. From then on all pretence was dispensed with and the party developed into a regular heroin jag. It seemed to have more of a mental than physical effect, notice-able particularly in the high state of nervous excitement which it produced, resulting in a great deal of loose talk and general overstatement.

In a short while Mr. Chen excused himself for a visit to the latrine. Chang, with a knowing twinkle, bent over and whispered: "That old son of a bitch! Sick!

Suffering! Why, he is just a dope fiend. Here he is with a whole phial supplied free by the Commander just to keep him alive and yet the bastard begrudges me a few grains when he knows that I only take it for medicinal reasons." Presently it was Chang's turn to leave us and Mr. Chen opened up: "It is regrettable that Commander Wang has seen fit to put you in the care of our companion. You can see for yourself that he is entirely untrustworthy. Anyone who takes heroin other than for medicinal reasons as I am forced to, cannot be trusted. If I were not going to Chungking on an important mission, I myself would look after you. Chang is a worthless scoundrel."

Soon after dark Commander Wang sent one of his body-guards to inform us that the alarm was over and that we were to return to our quarters. Arthur and I were rather perturbed over the day's experience. We both felt that it would be most unwise to entrust Mr. Chen with our dispatches for Chungking. Even for the most discreet person the route was hazardous enough, but for one of Mr. Chen's loquacious trend it would be just plain foolishness.

First thing the next morning we asked Chang to call on Commander Wang Yu-min, present our compliments, and request an interview. After some beating about the bush, he came to the point and asked us not to mention anything about the smoking incident of the previous day. Personally, he never touched the stuff, but as host he had felt it his duty to make Mr. Chen feel at ease and for that reason had taken a few puffs. We assured him that we quite understood his social obligations and at the same time expressed our doubts as to whether Mr. Chen was a suitable person to go to Chungking on our behalf. It was already obvious to us that Chang was jealous of Mr. Chen. It was also equally obvious that he was greatly relieved that we were evidently prepared to over-look his own shortcomings. If we kept our part of the bargain, we felt sure that he would relish putting a spoke in Mr. Chen's wheel.

Chang returned just before the afternoon meal; we were having two meals a day, the morning one at about ten and the afternoon one between four and five. He brought news that Commander Wang Yu-min would probably come over to see us that evening after dark.

The first intimation of his arrival was in the form of the same two bodyguards who had come to warn us of the alarm two nights before. They stayed in the room and busied themselves preparing tea whilst Chang went out to the front gate to await Yu-min's arrival. As we heard footsteps approaching, Arthur and I took our positions at the front door to receive him. As he entered he stood to attention and saluted, then stepping forward, shook our hands warmly. He seemed delighted to see us. He was accompanied by half a dozen heavily-armed bodyguards. He himself was dressed in the same regulation grey cotton uniform with no insignia whatsoever; around his waist was a leather belt to which was strapped a small automatic in a leather holster. Without the slightest formality he motioned us to be seated, himself sitting on one of the beds.

He congratulated us upon our successful escape, and we in turn praised the efficient organisation that had made it possible. He asked numberless questions in regard to the camp and expressed no little concern for the welfare of the internees: "Although the tide of war has now turned in our favour, the hardest part is yet to come. With the devils (the Japanese) fighting a losing battle in the Pacific, we must be prepared for repercussions of the vilest nature upon those of our brothers who are unfortunate enough to be in their hands. I consider myself highly fortunate in being in the position to be of service to my allies, the British and Americans. I and my soldiers will fight and die with happiness in our hearts if we can render service to our brave allied brothers." A most encouraging little speech, we decided.

Changing the subject to more practical affairs, we discussed the proposed plan to rescue the camp. He did not seem to be at all perturbed by our discouragement of this plan and passed it off with the remark that it could be left to the discretion of the authorities in Chungking to decide.

Yu-min reminded us that his messenger was awaiting our report to the British and American Embassies before setting off for Chungking, and that he expected us to give a full account of conditions within the camp and at the same time report on the ability of his unit to protect it, not only because of their military prowess but also because of their strategic proximity to the camp. He regretted that for obvious reasons it would not be possible for us to be taken on a tour of inspection of the regiments, munitions factories, clothing depots, schools and so forth, but we were at liberty to ask himself or Chang for any information that we considered necessary. Arthur remarked that we should certainly be in need of *accurate* information. Yu-min laughed and said that he had already had a word with Chang to this effect.

Before he left we touched on the question of Mr. Chen's suitability as messenger to Chungking. "I also realise that he is by no means a desirable person for this important mission, but on the other hand I probably know him better than you do, and in my opinion at the present juncture we are safer with him out of this area. Should he remain here it is possible that he may one day be indiscreet enough to disclose his knowledge to some undesirable third party, which would jeopardise our whole plan. If he goes away this possibility is removed. I shall not send him alone. He will be accompanied by one of my most trusted men who will carry the actual message himself, sewn into the soles of a pair of shoes."

Shut off from reliable war information as we had

been during the past year, we learned from Yu-min many interesting facts and developments and were surprised at the extensive understanding that he had of the world situation. After his departure, Arthur and I, on exchanging views, decided that we were both favourably impressed.

The following morning we sent Chang to buy some thin white silk handkerchiefs which we pasted on to sheets of thick paper with a light mixture of flour and water. On this we typed our report, separating the silk from the paper on completion of the typing. We found Chang both patient and helpful, and after several days, succeeded in extracting from him all the information that we considered necessary.

In compiling this report we laid particular stress upon the lack of adequate food in the camp, which had lowered the general resistance of the internees, and the consequent need of vitamins to supplement the deficient diet. We emphasised the necessity for providing medical supplies and, in particular, anti-epidemic serums. We urged that immediate steps be taken to resume the payment of "Comfort Money" in an amount that would compensate for the rising cost of commodity prices, and explained that until funds were made available to us for the camp's use, we intended to borrow from Commander Wang Yu-min, who had offered to finance any expenditure in this connection.

But our chief concern was to try to impress upon the Allied authorities in Chungking the necessity for taking every possible precaution to ensure the safety of the internees in the event of a crisis. What would happen to them when the Japanese realised defeat was inevitable? Would they be transferred to Japan as hostages against Allied bombing of the Japanese cities? How would the Japanese react under defeat? There might well be wholesale murder and rape.

We believed that the use of Yu-min's unit was the obvious *pro tem* solution. Strategically placed to undertake protective measures in an emergency, they had also a sufficient force to cope with the local Japanese garrisons for a limited period, and, with no more immediate or better solution, we pressed for supplies of ammunition with which to strengthen this unit.

A very detailed report on current conditions in camp was made, based on statistics which we had brought out with us, and we concluded with information on the local military and political situation. When completed, it was translated into Chinese for Yu-min's benefit and in due course he personally returned it to us and expressed his satisfaction. We both wrote short notes to our families and, on the off-chance that Billy Christian would be in Chungking, I wrote and asked him to do anything he could to help us.

In a few days the new shoes were completed with the report safely sewn between the layers of the cloth soles, and Mr. "Prosperous Year" Li, Yu-min's trusted messenger, and Mr. Chen left on the long journey to Chungking: we estimated that it would take them from two and a half to three months.

In gathering the information for this report, we learned a number of most interesting facts and figures regarding the unit, and strange as it may seem, the information obtained from Chang and Yu-min proved, upon investigation at a later date when we were free to move about, to be extraordinarily accurate.

When Yu-min had been confirmed as Commander after Wang Shang-chih's capture by the Japanese, the reorganised unit had been designated as the Fifteenth Mobile Column. At the time we joined the unit they had a strength of ten thousand fully armed men and a reserve of approximately one thousand inferior but usable rifles which were kept for emergency use and as a reserve for the village Self-Protection Corps. Yu-min had divided these troops into eight regiments and renamed them the " 43rd, 44th and 45th " and the " new 1st, new and ", etc., retaining his old 10th intact, and now known as the "43rd" — it acted as his own personal bodyguard, consisting of two thousand crack troops. The other regiments were stationed at various points throughout the area. Suncheng had been abandoned as the "capital", and under Yu-min's command the unit had once again be-come a mobile guerrilla force. He and his "43rd" were constantly on the move, never staying in one village more than a few days at a time, perhaps a week at the most.

Twenty armament and munitions factories were now operating, employing over two thousand men and producing mortars, light machine-guns, rifles, hand-grenades and ammunition. An immense system of home industries provided cloth for uniforms for at least twenty thousand men attached to the various branches of the organisation. Clothing and shoe factories operated by over a thousand employees made up this material into light summer uniforms and thick cotton-padded uniforms and overcoats for the winter. A widespread and efficient Civil Government was now collecting stabilised taxes and controlling, within reason, prices of staple commodities. Two middle schools and fifteen hundred Primary schools were opened. A daily newspaper was issued with up-to-the-minute radio news from Chungking and a Francisco. Gambling, opium, whoring and cigarette-smoking had been prohibited, but although this was strictly enforced amongst the common people, there was still some laxity amongst the governing classes and advantage was taken of the visit of any official to entertain in the approved manner.

When Yu-min took over the command of the Fifteenth he went out of the way to establish friendly relations with neighbouring units and with the exiled Provincial Government at Fuyang, on the northern borders of Kiangsu province. The Governor sent a

resident military attaché, Colonel Huang, to act as observer and military representative for the Shantung Government. Later, we got to know Huang very well indeed. He was a military man by profession and had taken part in the battle of Taierchuang, and later commanded a guerrilla unit in southern Shantung. He was a very suave and polished man, entirely at home in the net of intrigue spread throughout the guerrilla areas. He reported favourably to the Provincial Government on Yu-min's activities, not because he was impressed, but rather with an eye to the future. But Yu-min was not very successful in promoting his "friendly neighbour's" policy. Domineering in character and exacting in his demands for a co-operative bloc against the enemy, he made nearby leaders fear submersion and loss of their individual power should they co-operate too closely with him.

Practically all the surrounding units were now "grey" units, that is, although not entirely under the Japanese regime, they co-operated with them to a certain extent, inasmuch as most of them had secret "non-aggression" pacts. This had the advantage of leaving them free to cope with the Communists and for this reason they were not unduly frowned upon by Chungking, in spite of their alliance with the enemy. The Fifteenth was now the only unit in northern Shantung which had an absolutely clean record, having had no dealings with the Japanese, and for this reason the other units were jealous of the Fifteenth's reputation.

It was Yu-min's ambition to wean these puppet units from Japanese contacts and to form a strong and active anti-Japanese bloc. He persisted, although with little success at first, because he felt that as the war progressed in favour of the Allies, so his chances of success would become greater. A second and equally important reason for the formation of this bloc was the constant threat of the Communists. His relations with the puppet troops on his western boundary, under the command of the puppet Commander Li Wen Li at Weihsien, were on a basis of mutual understanding. The Japanese would not allow these puppet units to operate armament factories, and Yu-min came to an agreement with this particular unit whereby he allowed them to open a small factory for the manufacture and repair of rifles. In return he was allowed to smuggle supplies of ammunition and raw materials from Weihsien without interference from the puppet forces.

The area under the control of the Fifteenth was approximately two thousand square miles and had a population, as near as we could estimate, of between 750,000 and a million. To the west the Wei River formed a natural boundary, on the other side of which were the puppet troops of the Weihsien Garrison Commander Li Wen Li. Through this territory ran the Weihsien–Chefoo motor road, providing the Japanese with a quick communication line from Weihsien to the city of Changyi on the west bank of the River Wei, where the Japanese maintained a strong garrison which was a constant threat to the Fifteenth. From Changyi, this motor road cut across the northern section of the Fifteenth's area towards Chefoo, but this section had been destroyed. The Gulf of Chili formed the northern border, and to the east the Chiao River, although not an actual boundary, made a useful natural inner defence line for the heart of the area. The southern boundary was the Tsinan–Tsingtao railway on which the Japanese had three garrisons. Forty miles from the heart of the area to the cast, the Japanese had a large garrison at the prefectural city of Ping-tu. Japanese garrisons therefore surrounded the Fifteenth on three sides.

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June 1944 to August 1945

CHAPTER II

WITH THE GUERRILLAS

WE soon settled down to a very dull routine. We were still not allowed to appear in public and our activities were confined to strolls with Chang after dark. Occasionally he would have a visitor from Head-quarters on some pretext or another and we suspected that the visitor's real motive was to take a look at us rather than to see Chang. Considering how curious the Chinese are, the secret of our presence was kept fairly well for the first month, as we learned later. The few people who did know of our whereabouts were sworn to secrecy.

It was not long before Chang began to get on our nerves. He very rarely obtained what we asked him to, and if he did it took many days. He showed little interest in the food, which, although wholesome, became rather monotonous. For days on end we had the same dishes, not from lack of an alternative but because Chang was too lazy to do anything about it. He insisted on talking broken English and endeavoured to get Arthur to teach him. We, on the other hand, were just as determined to speak nothing but Chinese. We found him to be quite unreliable and an absolute liar. We had now been in the village almost two months and were thoroughly fed up with the manner in which we were restricted.

On one occasion when Yu-min visited us he asked if we had visited any of the local fairs or had seen anything of the country, and he appeared to be very surprised when we told him we had been given to understand that it was not yet considered safe for us to appear in public. He called Chang and told him to take us around to see the organisation and to acquaint us with the customs and manners of the country people. This came rather as a surprise to us and it appeared that for some inexplicable reason Chang had wished to keep us confined to our quarters.

After this we were allowed out on our own for walks, but it was decided that it probably would be unwise for us to visit any of the markets or fairs, as some of the larger ones were attended by people from all over the area and even from the neighbouring puppet areas.

We spent the greater part of the day in reading Chinese. Arthur had a fairly good knowledge of written Chinese, and with the time that we were now able to spend on it he soon became very proficient and read novels and classics with ease. I struggled along with the aid of a dictionary and read a novel in about as many weeks as it took Arthur days.

We had not been away from camp long before we decided that the most sensible thing to do was to shave our heads and thus cease to be the exception. Chang called in the village barber and he soon scraped our heads of the last remaining hair and polished them to a glistening surface, seldom seen even on the baldest of bald pates. It was delightfully cool and refreshingly clean. At first we felt extraordinarily naked and somewhat embarrassed, but as no one else seemed to see any-thing funny about it, we very soon became accustomed to it and every couple of weeks were re-shaved.

Our bathing facilities were crude a hand-basin and a piece of wood on which to stand but perfectly satisfactory.

However, Chang decided that we should have a proper bath. He had heard that the Military Munitions and Supply Department had just received a shipment of galvanised iron sheets, at much trouble and expense, for some particular job, and one afternoon he swaggered in to tell us that he had just been over to the Ministry of Supply and told them that we needed a bath, and now that they had the material they were to make it up immediately. We were extremely annoyed. We felt that the material certainly could be put to better use and told him to cancel the order right away. Nevertheless in due course a very large bath appeared and was placed in the middle of the courtyard, whereupon Chang invited us to take a bath. We told him that we would have nothing to do with it." All right," replied Chang, "if you prefer not to bath, I at least will enjoy it," and he proceeded to undress. This was just what he wanted; he had ordered it for himself rather than for us. Clad only in a pair of drawers hanging well below his knees, he departed with as much dignity as he could muster to have his bath. Having seen him immersed in the water, we locked the front door on him and departed through the back window. The following day the bath had disappeared.

One of our favourite pastimes took place in the evenings just before dusk, when Chang was usually hob-nobbing with one of his friends on the village wall. The mosquitoes were unusually fierce and of course we all had nets under which to sleep, but Chang's was made with a slit down one side so that it remained suspended over the bed the whole day with the two flaps turned back. At dusk, before the mosquitoes started to get busy, his orderly had very definite instructions to close the flaps so that they could not get in. Folding back the flaps, one of us would go on point-duty and wave in clouds of mosquitoes while the other kept watch. Chang never

found out how they got in, but of course blamed his orderly, who was no friend of ours. Eventually we had to stop this because Chang, getting little sleep, saw to it that neither did we. Lighting the candle, he would spend hours chasing mosquitoes, swearing and frequently waking us up to ask whether we had any in our nets. After that we restricted our activities to once a week, when we would collect a match-box full of bed-bugs, or a scorpion, and let them loose in his bed.

We worried him about the food and for a few days it improved, but not for long. He was always threatening to buy a young pig's leg, for which he professed to have a special way of cooking, and finally one day he got it. He spent practically the whole day with the cook watching the preparation of his favourite delicacy, only to announce to us in the evening that the cook "had ruined it, completely ruined it!" and in due course the usual fried egg-plant was served. After the meal we went out for a walk, disgusted and disappointed. Returning somewhat earlier than usual, we found Chang gorging himself on a huge bowl of succulent pork. Not in the least embarrassed, he explained that he was just tasting it so that he could find out exactly what the cook had done wrong and so ensure that he did not make the same mistake a second time!

The situation soon reached the point where we found it hard to speak a civil word to him and we decided to try and get in touch with Yu-min and ask for a change of guardian. But as Chang was our only means of contacting him, it was rather difficult. We of course told Chang that we wanted to see Yu-min, but he kept making excuses, and in the end we decided to write a letter to Yu-min in Chinese and give it to him ourselves the next time we saw him. As Chang was usually present at these interviews, it was impossible to talk about it in front of him.

The next time we saw Yu-min he asked Arthur whether he would undertake to teach English at the Middle School. As Arthur had previously been teaching English at the Catholic Chinese University of Fu Jen in Peking, it was rather difficult to find an acceptable excuse. We were both equally decided that this was the last thing that we wanted to do, the only advantage being that it offered an escape from Chang. During this interview we managed to slip Yu-min the letter and put off making any final decision until we had seen what effect our letter had.

We did not have an opportunity of seeing Yu-min again for three weeks, and by then we were so fed up with Chang that we had made up our minds to take on the teaching job, and in due course set off for the Middle School of the Four Virtues. It was arranged that we should take up residence a few days before the term commenced. We set off early one morning on horseback. It was an exhilarating ride in the cool of the morning. The road for the most part followed the Chiao River, now and again taking short-cuts through the ripening crops. The early summer wheat had already been harvested and sweet potatoes had taken its place, but the kaoliang, a coarse sorghum which, with millet, formed the basic diet of the farmers, was already seven feet high and before it was harvested it would be nearly ten feet. During this period — July to September — the Japanese never attacked guerrilla areas, as these high crops afforded far too many opportunities for ambush, as they had learned in the early days of the war when they were less experienced. Everyone looked on these few months as a period of rest and relaxation and full advantage was taken by the factories to step up production.

We arrived at the school at about midday, to be welcomed by the Principal, who, after giving us an excellent meal, showed us to our new quarters: a large barn-like room divided into a bedchamber at either end with a living-room in the middle. The bedroom consisted of the usual brick k'ang, a table and a chair, and the living -room had a table and four chairs. Left to our own devices we started to clean the room out. The first thing we came across was a hand-grenade buried amongst a pile of dust and rubbish. Not having any particular use for it as Chang had already left, we tossed it into the garden, and much to our surprise, it exploded! In a very short time practically the whole faculty appeared, greatly concerned for our safety. Hardly had we finished explaining the situation when Chang arrived! He had a message from Headquarters to the effect that Yu-min after all considered it inadvisable for us to teach. A friend of his had just arrived from the railway zone and brought news that the Japanese had heard rumours of two foreigners in his area, and as the students came from widespread districts, the presence of two English teachers would no doubt soon be generally known and he thought it unwise for us to advertise our whereabouts so blatantly. Late that night we arrived back in our old homestead with our friend Chang.

The following day we called on the Chief of the Entertaining Department, with whom we were well acquainted. He was an enormous man, over six feet, and very fat, a typical good-natured easy-going Shantungese. His job was to see that the visiting officials were properly entertained. Naturally this ranked as one of the most coveted jobs in the organisation.

Being determined not to put up with Chang any longer, we enlisted his support. Chang was held in little respect by other members of the unit, but as he had been with them from the beginning, it was difficult to get rid of him. Yu-min had given him instructions that we were to have the best of every-thing, but during the three months in which he had been looking after us, it was rumoured that he had bought a horse and cart and had added several tens of acres to his homestead. He smoked opium when he had the opportunity, was not averse to a little gambling and kept a whore in the village. He had certain capabilities and it was recognised that he was useful on special

missions, particularly to puppet areas. He had already been retired twice and it was only upon our arrival that his knowledge of English had made it necessary to resurrect him. Yu-min was annoyed that he had again proved to be a failure.

Within two weeks we had set off for our new quarters, leaving Chang behind. This time we moved to a small and attractive village called the "home of the Ch'iao family ", on the bank of the Chiao River and less than half a mile from a village frequently used by Yu-min as his Headquarters. Here we were put in the hands of the manager of the local shoe factory, Mr. "Clear Spring" Wang, a native of Chingpu village, Yu-min's home. He was a shrunken little man of about fifty-five with delightful old-world manners and the will to please. We were housed in a small cottage at the end of a lane leading off the main street of the village, with a small sand-strewn courtyard and one or two outhouses. Our meals were prepared at the shoe factory and brought up by our orderly

Yu-min came to see us the day after our arrival and brought with him a Mr. Han, the Chief of the Civil Government's education and propaganda bureau, who lived in the same village. He informed us that he had made further enquiries regarding the news that his friend had brought him and he was now convinced that there was no indication that the Japanese had any ideas as to our whereabouts, and therefore we could consider ourselves free to go where we pleased. Mr. Han would arrange for us to take any particular trips we wanted to make. He suggested that we thoroughly familiarise ourselves with the organisation of the Fifteenth by visiting the Regimental Headquarters, Civil Government offices, etc., taking particular note of any details of management upon which we could improve.

Life at once took on a different atmosphere. When Headquarters visited the neighbourhood, we often went over for meals and received visits from various officials and executives who came to call on us. The Civil Government's radio station and newspaper publishing offices were in our village, which enabled us to hear the news from London and America. We visited the armament factories, attended public meetings and celebrations. Arthur made his first public speech in Chinese at a meeting celebrating the anniversary of the Chinese Republic, and it went down very well.

Sometimes we would go over to the military training school for the day. Our first introduction to this institution was when Yu-min asked us to accompany him on a review of the graduating class. The school was run by a young, rather scholarly soldier who took great pride in his work. There were two sections, a refresher class for junior officers and a training class for recruits. There were usually about six to seven hundred undergoing training. Up at 4 A.M., they were taken for a five-mile run in the country, followed by an hour’s callisthenics. Quarters were then inspected and the classes assembled for two hours' instructions. The morning meal of coarse bread and vegetables, with meat twice a week, was then served, outside if the weather permitted. This was followed by two hours of political instruction and three hours on the parade-ground. The next hour was spent in studying and reading Chinese characters. After the afternoon meal basket-ball contests were held, and at eight "lights out" was sounded.

The living-quarters were spotless. The mud walls of the rooms were whitewashed and the earthen floor covered with straw matting, neat rolls of bedding were placed against the walls at regular intervals and alongside them an extra pair of shoes, a tin mug, a tooth-brush and a towel. The class-rooms were in large, airy buildings, capable of holding two to three hundred at plain wooden desks. We found the morale excellent and the recruits enthusiastic in the work and play. New recruits were given six months' training before being drafted to the various regiments, the officers' periods varying from one to three months.

One of the most interesting places that we visited was the ammunition factory. This was the most "hush-hush" factory in the area and few even of the military officials had seen it. It was operated by a man who had previously been employed in the provincial arsenal at Tsinan. Although he had received no schooling, and was unable to read, he was a genius in his own particular line. From scrap metals he had constructed a series of heavy hand-operated presses by which copper coins were moulded into cartridge cases. These coins, about the size of a penny, were fed by hand into the first of the series of machines, each machine doing its particular part in shaping the casings until the coin that entered the first machine came out of the sixth a perfectly moulded cartridge case. At the time of our visit he was just completing the construction of a set of heavy rollers for pressing sheets of copper to the desired thickness, this being necessitated by the growing shortage of coins. Powder and bullets were also manufactured in this factory from raw materials bought from various sources outside the area. The output at the time of our visit was 50,000 a month, but this depended upon the raw material available and was by no means regular.

From time to time supplies of steel were augmented by raids on the railway. The original rails were of good German steel and these were eagerly sought, but by now there were few of them left and the Japanese replacements were of poor quality, too soft to make satisfactory rifles. As raw materials became scarce, they too had to be used.

The power for the lathes in these factories was in all cases supplied by mules. Outside the factory building, against one of the walls, and covered by a crude mat shed, was the "power house". A large wheel about five feet in diameter and mounted on a well-greased hub about four

feet from the ground, was harnessed to either one or two mules, which, with a cloth bound over their eyes, plodded around for hours on end. Through a series of cogged wheels, this power was transmitted to the primary shaft from which canvas belts transmitted the power to the several lathes. It was crude but effective. Arthur and I spent many hours in the factories, fascinated by the transformation of steel rails into rifles, light machine-guns and even automatic rifles. Considering the tools available, the workmanship was superb.

At the time Yu-min took over the command, each regiment had its own factory for the repair and manufacture of rifles, but as soon as he had come into office he discontinued this practice and brought these factories under the control of the munitions department, the chief of which was directly responsible to Yu-min. Although this greatly improved the efficiency of these factories, increased the output and maintained a more equal distribution of arms, naturally it did not meet with the approval of certain of the Commanders, but Yu-min overruled any objections. Similarly it had been the practice of each Regimental Commander to be responsible for the collection of taxes in his area, from which he paid his expenses. Under Yu-min's régime, the Civil Government was responsible for the collection of taxes, and the Regimental Commanders drew a monthly subsidy from the government funds. This too was a point much disputed and caused discontent amongst some of the Commanders.

This was probably the contributing factor which led one of the Regimental Commanders on the western border to defy Yu-min's authority. Yu-min summoned the Commander to Headquarters, and when he failed to appear, sent the "43rd" to the scene of the trouble, arrested the offender and had both him and his wife buried alive without further ado. After this episode there was little further opposition to governmental policy.

JAPANESE SPIES BEING BURIED ALIVE

Yu-min gave little quarter to those who defied him or disobeyed the more strictly enforced regulations. Dope pedlars were shot on the spot, together with their customers. On one occasion soon after our arrival, a pedlar of heroin had been caught and together with five of his customers was publicly shot at one of the local fairs. In his quest for totalitarian discipline and in his enthusiasm for the cause, Yu-min rode roughshod over the unwritten laws of human relationship. He demanded and obtained a degree of efficiency and discipline previously unknown in this unit.

After the harvesting of the crops in September we had to spend a few days on the run from the Japanese. One morning we were awakened from a sound sleep by Mr. "Clear Spring" banging on our door. "Get up! Get up! Quickly! Quickly! The devils are here! "Hastily getting into our clothes, we grabbed a few essentials, threw them into our knapsacks and quickly followed " Clear Spring " through the deserted streets of the village and out of the west gate. Here he was joined by his assistant manager and other members of the factory, and in single file we plodded across country in a westerly direction towards his native village. Everything appeared to be very peaceful, as in fact it was.

"Clear Spring, where are we heading for?" asked Arthur.

"We are going home. You have not been to the west river before? It is beautiful — the crystal-clear waters of the Wei! And the golden sand! The orchards stretching as far as the eye can see along the banks of the river! The pears from my trees are without comparison. I have many friends there who will look after you."

Yes, but why are we going?

"Yu-min sent word to close up the shoe factory — he is expecting an attack from the devils. It is nothing. It is always this way after the harvest. They send out expeditions to steal our grain, but now we are strong and do not fear them. Come; let us hurry, it is better to arrive before dawn. When we arrive I will buy a fish from the Wei River and we will have a feast. We will have chicken too. During these days of emergency it is the custom to eat well. It is better to kill one's chickens and eat them than for the Japanese to take them away."

With the dawn we arrived at a village where "Clear Spring" told us his friends would look after us. We were introduced to a delightful old character who turned out to be the headman for the district. He said he had just the place for us, and led us through various alley-ways into a small house enclosed with its courtyard by a high wall. Here we said goodbye to "Clear Spring" whose village was a couple of miles further on. He promised to see us later in the day.

Spreading the quilts that we found on the k'ang, we went to sleep. We were hurriedly awakened just after ten by our new friend with the news that the Japs were approaching the village from the north and were only a

mile away. We must leave immediately. Climbing over the village wall we made for the open country and a hill about half a mile from the village. We were not the only ones: mules, oxen and goats were being led and driven from the village into the open country, where they disappeared behind trees and into gullies, leaving one of the villagers behind at a vantage point to follow the movements of the enemy.

As we climbed the hill, so the view of the surrounding country spread before us. Half-way up we paused to rest and take stock of the situation. Peanuts, melon seeds and cigarettes were produced and handed round by our host as we settled ourselves comfortably in the thick grass. A cloud of dust approaching the north wall of the village we had just left marked the oncoming Japanese column. Two miles to the south-west, Yu-min and his Headquarters staff, mounted on horseback and followed by a long column of foot soldiers, were leisurely heading for the belt of trees along the river-bank. He knew this Japanese column had come from Changyi city and would probably return there by nightfall, and by skirting the river-bank he could pass to the north-west of them and be in a favourable position to ambush them on their return later in the day. The Japanese passed around the west and south walls of our village and headed directly east. After we had seen them well on their way, we returned to the village, leaving one of our party on the hill to keep an eye on the movements of the Japs.

To celebrate our arrival and the fact that the Japanese had not entered the village, our host prepared a most delicious feast. Copious draughts of strong white native wine were drunk in between the courses, and between toasts drinking games were played. During the night we were awakened from a rather wine-drugged slumber by someone banging on the door to the accompaniment of machine-gun and rifle fire. We opened it to find one of our hosts: "Quick! Follow me." We left everything except our pants, which we struggled into as we followed him down the alley-way. As we reached the main street he motioned us to stop as he crept forward and, looking carefully down both sides of the street, he beckoned to us to follow him. Reaching the village wall, we went through

A SHORT RESPITE DURING NIGHT MANOEUVRES

the same procedure. Sharp bursts of machine-gun fire continued outside the west wall, answered by spasmodic rifle fire and hand-grenades. We headed for the ploughed fields, and a couple of hundred yards from the village stopped to listen. In the distance we could hear the dust-muffled clip-clop of horses' hooves. We flattened ourselves rigidly to the ploughed earth. Presumably our guide knew where he was. The shuffle of feet was now audible with an occasional clink of metal and a subdued snort or two from the horses. It was pitch dark and we could see nothing; we just hoped that we were far enough from the road to avoid detection. Each second seemed to last an hour as this column passed.

We spent the rest of the night wandering aimlessly about the countryside, but dawn found us knocking at the gate of a strange village, where we were admitted, and called on friends of our friend. They too were glad to see daylight and like ourselves had spent most of the night in the open country. They produced a bottle of wine and we all had a few drinks to warm us up while waiting for something to eat. The raid had apparently disorganised the kitchen and we were on the third bottle before the first dish appeared; by this time all had developed a healthy contempt for the Japanese. It was a very cheerful gathering; more friends dropped in and out, having the odd drink. Half-way through the meal I asked our host what was the latest news of the Japs. "Just now," he replied, "they are passing along the road adjacent to the south wall of the village." Fortified as we all were by the demise of several bottles, this news was treated as decidedly humorous. "Well, at least the gate is closed," remarked our host, and we continued with the meal.

There were no further disturbances that day, and the next day we had news that the Japanese from Changyi had returned to their garrison, but there was still one band roving about to the south. We stayed on in our friend's house for a few more days.

It was of course dirty and bug-ridden, but we had long passed the stage where that worried us. We were much more disturbed by the enormous pig that lived in the latrine pit. The accepted form of convenience in these country homes was a large square pit about six feet across with steps leading down from the side, the whole usually being enclosed by a wooden fence. This was at the same time the latrine and the rubbish pit. Every self-respecting citizen of any standing kept a pig and what would be more natural than to keep him in the latrine? He had the option of either wallowing on the dusty ledge of the pit on which one squatted, or if he preferred it, as he usually did, he could waddle down the steps and root around for delicacies to be found in the pit. Balancing on the edge of such a slush-pit was bad enough in itself, but with the additional hazard of a hungry pig it became a matter of the most acute physical danger.

After three or four days, we bid farewell to our

hosts and returned to the village of the Ch'iao family and Mr. "Clear Spring ". Arthur and I were much impressed with the manner in which these people, whom we had never seen before, so willingly offered their hospitality and exposed themselves to certain death from the Japanese had they been caught sheltering us. The cheerful and light-hearted manner in which they took these Japanese raids was certainly heartening.

As has long been the established custom in China, many of the Army officers take their wives and families to the front with them. China has been in an almost continuous state of war for generations, and they would have had little home life if they had not done so. In the case of this guerrilla unit it was, of course, somewhat different, as the greater majority had their established homes in the area. But in spite of this there was little real home life. The wives and families of officials were as much a target for the Japanese and the puppet forces as their men folk, and for this reason they could not afford to live permanently in their homes. They too had to be on the move, with the result that they had perhaps five or six temporary homes at the same time. Others lived with their husbands wherever they happened to be stationed. Apart from a better variety of food, they lived and dressed much as the peasants.

Some, of course, particularly if they were not natives of the area, had what were known as resistance war wives "; that is, wives for the duration of the war.

Generally speaking, we found little difficulty in settling into the life of these guerrillas. It was hard, rigorous and simple, but after the first six months we were accepted and treated as one of themselves, and Yu-min was not alone in his concern for our welfare. The fact that disturbed him and some of the others more than anything else was that neither of us was married: "This war may yet go on for some time.

It is possible that both of you might be killed or captured in the next Japanese raid. It appals me to think that you Might die without leaving an heir to tend to the graves of your honourable family. We have in the Middle School of the Four Virtues several well-educated and attractive girls who would make excellent wives. Please give consideration to this." We enquired whether such an arrangement would be considered as a "resistance war" marriage or whether it would be final. "Although I consider it necessary some-times to close my eyes to such arrangements, I do not approve of these ` resistance wives ' and I could not consent to such an arrangement in your case, as I myself should have to be the sponsor." We promised to give the matter our consideration!

One day Yu-min asked us what we thought of his Head-quarters staff and general organisation, but, as was so often the case, he himself answered the question: " You may think that I have drawn into my organisation a number of incompetent and useless people. I have, but you will notice that none of them are in positions of importance. I believe that every man has his quota of good points, which at some time or another may be put to advantageous use. There are only a few perfect people in this world, so, when you select a person to serve you, it is important to see that his good points outweigh his shortcomings. If his faults are stronger than his good points, then only should he be discarded. If you follow in the steps of Pao Shu Ya (a favourite of one of the princelings of the Spring and Autumn Annals period, 500 B.C., noted for his cooking) who, if he only once saw the faults in a person, never forgot and had no further use for him, there would actually be no person whom one could use, as we all have our faults to a greater or lesser degree."

Another point in this connection which he did not mention and which had some bearing on his policy, was the fact that in his position he could not afford to have disgruntled or dissatisfied members of his entourage desert to the Japanese or the puppet forces, and this left him with two alternatives in dealing with people for whom he had no use or who had offended against his disciplinary measures : retirement with provision of adequate support, or execution --and he did not hesitate to resort to the latter method if he considered it advisable, and if he thought that he could get away with it. This created a very different atmosphere from that which prevailed under Wang Shang-chih, and many of those who had worked under Wang Shang-chih found some uneasiness in this cold disciplinary atmosphere with which Yu-min surrounded himself, with the result that, although he had a firm control over his subordinates, there was little if any feeling of friendship towards him except from his own particular clan.

He maintained a great interest in, and a sympathetic attitude towards, the welfare of the peasants: " In administration of the people's affairs, the thing most to be guarded against in an organisation such as mine is selfishness. The selfish official will administer affairs to his own advantage. If he himself reaps large profits, then the others will have no share; when the others have no share, then they will certainly make trouble. The wants of the people must be considered rather than those of the individual." In spite of his efforts to eradicate graft amongst his officials, he was not completely successful, but it was at least kept to a minimum. There was occasionally speculation in the exchange rate between the guerrilla notes and the Japanese currency or on the prices of grain, but in such cases large cuts were demanded by the government.

Intensive propaganda taught the people the necessity of personal sacrifice as their contribution to the war effort and emphasised that they were an integral part of this military organisation. Although their living was cut to a minimum, good care was taken to avoid undue

regimentation of their personal lives. Theatrical entertainments were provided, no restrictions were placed on the manufacture and sale of the local wine, limited imports of daily necessities from the Japanese-occupied areas were allowed and there were no restrictions on the daily village markets.

Conscription was of course enforced, but in such a way that this was not carried out to the point where it would interfere with agricultural production. During the harvest period all schools were closed to enable the older youths to work in the fields, and a certain number of soldiers were released to augment the harvesting when necessary. Pensions were provided for the dependants of those killed in action.

As a result of this policy the military could depend to the fullest extent upon the co-operation of the peasants, without which the existence of a guerrilla unit of this nature would be impracticable. But perhaps the most binding factor in this co-operation between the peasants and the military was the fact that nearly every home had some member of the family in the forces, thus bridging the gap between the civil and military which elsewhere is so wide.

We found some of the officials most discreet and uncommunicative on current military affairs, but fortunately by now we had a circle of close acquaintances who treated us with absolute confidence. Amongst these was the regimental commander of the "new 1st", Chao Chih-yi. He was a native of Szechuan and was one of several officers dispatched by the Central Government to help organise guerrilla units behind the Japanese lines. Moving from one point to an-other, he had eventually settled down with the Fifteenth, and despite the fact that he came from outside the district, his efficiency soon brought him recognition, and with his marriage to a local girl he was accepted as one of the clique; but he himself never lost the ability to look at this unit from an outside point of view, and in this lay the secret of his success.

It was from Chih-yi that we first gathered an inkling of coming events.

Since the capture of Wang Shang-chih by the Japanese, there had been some restlessness amongst his followers. Wang himself had been placed in hospital by the Japanese at Tsingtao and during the past four months his health, under expert Japanese care, had improved very rapidly. Feeling grateful, he was naturally susceptible to Japanese propaganda.

At the time of his defeat and subsequent capture at Suncheng, the situation had seemed hopeless to his followers, and capitulation was seriously considered. Looking around them to the semi-puppet guerrilla units, it seemed a small price to pay for their continued existence and the safeguarding of their homes. After all, it required little but lip service to the Japanese.

Yu-min thought otherwise and by sheer force of character carried the day. Nevertheless, he realised that as long as Wang Shang-chih remained in the hands of the Japanese, he was a constant threat to the unity of the Fifteenth. For months he racked his brain for a plan that would affect the rescue of Wang, and as the latter's health improved, so he realised the urgency of putting some scheme into effect.

Word reached Yu-min through his intelligence that Wang had succumbed to Japanese inducements, and was endeavouring to get in touch with certain Regimental Commanders with a view to winning them over to his point of view. Yu-min felt sufficiently confident of his own position and, in inter-viewing the Commanders concerned, he proposed that they should appear to fall in with Wang's proposals regarding the capitulation of the unit to the Japanese. At the same time he took the precautionary measure of keeping a close watch on the families of the Regimental Commanders to satisfy himself that there would be no double-crossing.

On the evening of 18th October, we received a visit from Mr. Han. It was quite evident from his manner that he had something of importance on his mind. Dismissing the orderly, he sat down at the table: "I have come to warn you that you must be ready to move at a moment's notice. Prepare as few personal belongings as possible and sleep in your clothes. I will arrange that anything you may leave behind will be hidden and taken good care of by the village headman. Wang Shang-chih has been rescued and we are expecting a heavy Japanese attack. When the time comes Clear Spring' will take you to a safe place of hiding." We pressed him for details of the rescue but he replied that he himself was not aware of them. A state of emergency had been declared throughout the area and he was now on his way to Headquarters to find out what was going on.

After he left we packed our knapsacks and went to bed in our padded clothes, ready to run at a moment's notice. We did this for three nights and nothing happened. In the meantime everyone was talking about Yu-min's coup, and, detail by detail, we got the full story. Wang Shang-chih had been led to believe by the representative whom Yu-min had sent to him that his plan of co-operation with the Japanese would meet with a favourable reception from the majority of Yu-min's followers. Weeks of negotiation followed, during which time Wang Shang-chih exerted all his influence to convince Yu-min of the advisability of this move, but Yu-min was clever enough to profess great reluctance. At last he gave in and declared himself willing to discuss the matter if a meeting could be arranged, and after further negotiation it was agreed that a preliminary meeting would be held to consider in detail the arrangements pertaining to the capitulation of the Fifteenth to the Japanese.

It was agreed that the place at which this meeting would take place would be just outside the western border adjacent to Changyi city. These negotiations aroused great interest amongst the Japanese, who for the past year had considered the Fifteenth as a growing menace, as it was the only unit which had consistently caused them trouble from the very beginning, and they were somewhat at a loss to know how best to deal with it. They had to admit that the usual mopping-up expeditions carried out against this unit had failed to do more than to quieten it for a few months, and with the Japanese war effort expanding into Honan province and the increasing pressure from the Communists in other parts of Shantung, they had not the number of men available necessary to wipe it out completely. If Wang Shang-chih could attain the desired result by negotiation, they would at least have some measure of control over him. They decided to send two high Japanese military officials with Wang, and the Chinese puppet manager of the North China News Bureau, and current editor of the Tsingtao New People's Press, to cover the meeting. In due course the party arrived at Changyi, where they were joined by the Chinese puppet Garrison Commander.

Although it had been agreed that troops of neither side would be present at this meeting, the Changyi Garrison Commander thought it advisable to be prepared and the party set off for the rendezvous accompanied by a bodyguard of one hundred. Yu-min had taken a similar precaution two companies of the "43rd" lay in ambush in the vicinity against any unexpected developments.

The conference opened with polite and congratulatory speeches on either side, confessions of past misunderstanding and assurances of mutual co-operation in the building of the New Order in East Asia. Yu-min promised supplies of copper and grain, cotton and other raw materials needed by the Japanese. Greatly elated by the smoothness with which this potentially difficult negotiation had been successfully terminated, the guests willingly accepted Yu-min's invitation to a feast and theatrical entertainment at the nearest border village, Yangchiakou. The Garrison Commander's bodyguard were quartered in a nearby village and similarly entertained.

The best wine and food to be obtained were provided, and there was much drinking and jollification at the dinner, speeches by the Japanese delegates and Wang Shang-chih, and replies by Yu-min and others of his staff. Soon after the conclusion of the party Yu-min asked his guests to excuse him, as he had much to talk over with Wang Shang-chih, suggesting that they entertain themselves at the theatrical performance or at mah-jongg. Asking Wang Shang-chih to accompany him to a private room, he left.

Yu-min's exit was the agreed signal and he had hardly left the room before six of his trusted bodyguards entered with drawn Mausers. With a look of bewildered amazement, the Japanese facing the door slumped to the floor, and the other with his back to the door never knew what had hit him! The puppet Garrison Commander and the newspaper man were taken into custody. Within half an hour eighty of the puppet guard had been arrested, six were killed, and the balance managed to escape. Wang Shang-chih was put under close guard.

Having successfully carried out the first part of the plan, Yu-min set about the second. A pre-arranged radio signal was sent immediately to the various Regimental Commanders, and simultaneous attacks were made on six Japanese and puppet garrison points along the border areas of the Fifteenth. Taken by surprise, all six capitulated before dawn. Never in the history of the unit had such a decisive blow been struck. There were celebrations everywhere and the people were worked up to a high pitch of enthusiasm; they were genuinely happy and a load seemed to have been lifted from their shoulders. It was not until the morrow that talk of this amazing feat was tinged with apprehension as to the possible reprisals.

Within a few days Yu-min received a radio message of commendation from Chungking, at the same time reaffirming his position as Commander of the Fifteenth. Wang Shang-chih had been completely in the dark as regards Yu-min's plans and it was as much of a surprise to him as to the others. He felt that his position was now rather delicate. Yu-min had been officially confirmed as Commander, and if he remained at Headquarters he would sooner or later come into conflict with Yu-min on matters of policy. In any case it was not so easy to dispose of the label reading "traitor" with which he was now branded. He decided to retire from military life altogether for the time being and await further developments.

Some days later the puppet director of the North china News Bureau begged for an interview with Yu-min. This was granted. Yu-min received him and asked him to sit down at the table. The director, turning his back, fumbled with his overcoat as if about to take it off, and one of the bodyguards nearby stepped forward to assist him. At that very moment he whirled round with a revolver in his hand. With lightning speed the bodyguard hit his arm, and the bullet pierced the top of the table. Yu-min jumped to his feet with a few round oaths and, ordering the man to be brought before him for an investigation that afternoon, left the room.

Upon being questioned, the man admitted that he was acting under instructions from Wang Shang-chih. This was all Yu-min needed to know and he had the director shot on the spot. He had been undecided how best to deal with Wang Shang-chih; now it had been decided for him. He was put under official arrest and confined to a house in a small village in the south-east of the area.

With the disposal of Wang Shang-chih, Yu-min was

now at the peak of his power, and if there were any of his followers with personal ambitions, they certainly shelved them for the time being. There were always a few who insisted secretly that the shooting incident had never taken place, and that the whole affair was a trumped-up plan to dispose of Wang Shang-chih, but the truth of that may never be known, as the two bodyguards who were allegedly present at the shooting have since been killed on active service. The events of the past few days began to have their effect upon the "grey" guerrilla leaders in the neighbourhood. Now it was they who sent representatives and special missions to the Fifteenth seeking friendly agreements.

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June 1944 to August 1945

CHAPTER III

CONTACT WITH CHUNGKING

NOVEMBER passed without incident, and with December came the hard North China winter. We were provided with thick cotton-padded jacket and trousers of locally woven cotton cloth, and early in December we each received a long black padded gown which covered us from neck to ankles, but in spite of this we were frozen. Every hour or so that we were not in bed, we had either to go for a brisk walk or to take a ten-minute run around the courtyard to warm up. A small open stove, made out of a kerosene tin lined with clay, gave off a most nauseating gas and very little heat. We both developed painful chilblains which we cured eventually by long immersion in a strong solution of hot water and salt an old Russian custom which Arthur fortunately remembered.

Never shall I forget the morning on which we had our first sight of American bombers flying in perfect formation north-east towards Manchukuo. We had heard them occasionally in the summer but had never actually seen them. Now they were passing over fairly regularly and with their passage over our territory we gained considerable prestige. The people could actually see for themselves the Allied assistance of which they had read so much in the newspapers.

December the 12th had been a miserably cold day with a strong wind, which by evening had developed into a blizzard. Arthur had already gone to bed and I was on the point of doing the same when I heard a plane; it seemed to pass directly over the house heading north. In a few moments it was back again, this time to the east. It seemed to be circling, as the throb of the engine again became audible. Going to the door I had a look outside; snow was still falling, although not so heavily. It seemed as though the plane must have lost its bearings, and with the hope that, if it was a Jap, he would come to grief, I turned in.

Before breakfast the next morning a very excited orderly from the Chief of the Entertaining Department arrived: "The Chief for the Entertaining of our honoured guests hopes that you have slept well and requests that you come over to see him immediately, so that arrangements can he made for your return to your home country by aeroplane."

"The guy's nuts, — aeroplane? What aeroplane? Arthur asked.
"The aeroplane that arrived last night to take you to your honourable country," replied the orderly.
"Well, I'm damned! Come on, let's go, it may have something to do with the plane I heard last night. It probably crashed."

The Chief of the Entertaining Department was waiting for us at the entrance to his office, and, with alternate hand-shakes and hearty slaps on the back, ushered us into his room.
"Well, at last it has come. Owing entirely to your efforts we have established contact with our British and American allies. Think what this will mean to the prestige of the Fifteenth."
"What has come?
"The aeroplane."
"Well, where is it?
"It's gone back again. Probably in Chungking again by now."
"Why were we not told about it before? One of us might have gone back to Chungking."
"But it didn't land."
"Well, for God's sake tell us what did happen!
"All I know is that a plane came last night and dropped by `descending umbrella' the two messengers whom we sent to Chungking, `Prosperous Year' Li and Mr. Chen, and twelve large packages of supplies. Li and Chen are at Headquarters, and search-parties have been sent out to find the packages. I have sent a messenger to Headquarters to bring us the latest news and to send a couple of horses for you In the meantime, let us have a feast to celebrate."

During the course of the morning information drifted down to us. Li was unhurt, but Chen had been badly dragged and was suffering from severe bruises and frostbite. Seven of the packages had been located. Some of them had been carried by the wind into the neighbouring area to the east. This was unfortunate, but representatives had already been sent, taking with them one hundred thousand dollars as a gift for the co-operation they expected to receive in locating the packages.

During the late afternoon two bodyguards rode in, leading ponies to take us back to Headquarters. We galloped practically all the way.

On arrival we were met by Yu-min and others of the Headquarters staff. They informed us that they had now located all but two of the packages and hoped they would all be in by the morning. We went into Yu-min's room and sat around on the heated k'ang. A large charcoal

brazier was brought in, and a bottle of wine was produced, with a few snacks to eat whilst dinner was being prepared.

Presently "Prosperous Year" Li came in, looking very well, and none the worse for his experiences, and very proud of this mission which he had so successfully completed. He gave us a large package of letters that he personally had carried from Chungking, the first real contact we had had with the outside world for twenty months.

Yu-min was very happy that night and, much to every-one's surprise, drank several cups of wine. After dinner he left us, explaining that he had much work to do and no doubt we had a lot of questions to ask "Prosperous Year".

"How did you find things in Chungking?" we asked.

"I have never been in such a crowded city before. Why, every street is as crowded as the main street of this village on market day. Living is very expensive but it is possible to buy luxury goods. But many of the people are practically starving, the salaries of the small officials, clerks and teachers, are such that it is difficult for them to live. On the other hand, higher government officials are making fortunes, as are some of the bigger merchants. The soldiers are poorly fed and equipped: our soldiers here eat better than the National Government troops. Many of the military and civil officials are concerned more with their private affairs than with the welfare of the people or the prosecution of the war effort. To be honest, I was much disappointed."

"And what is the attitude towards guerrillas — such as our unit, for instance?

"Prosperous Year" laughed. "Generally speaking, I should say that we are considered as undisciplined hordes, little better than bandits. The people in the rear have no conception of the life that we lead here behind the enemy lines or the part that we are playing in the resistance war. It is disheartening and I fear we shall get little assistance unless it is from our American allies, who have the final say in many affairs. They may appear to us to be crude and lacking in manners from the Chinese standpoint --- interested only in drink and women -- but they are remarkably efficient and get done in a few hours what would take us weeks or even months, if it ever got done at all. They are a beneficial influence on our militarists and are forcing them to make improvements and reforms long overdue, and they are training our forces in methods of fighting hitherto unknown in China. With their continued assistance China may one day expect to take her place among the great nations of the world; alone we cannot."

We were delighted to hear that Billy Christian was back in Chungking, a Colonel with the Office of Strategic Services. "Prosperous Year" was full of admiration for the time and energy that Billy had devoted to helping him. It seems doubtful whether we should have got very far without his assistance. It was early in the morning before we stretched out on the k'ang and went to sleep.

"Prosperous Year" had given us a long account of his journey to Chungking. They had been delayed at the outset by Mr. Chen, who fell sick at the railway junction of Hsuchow and were again delayed at the temporary seat of the exiled Shantung Government at Fuyang, awaiting other members to join the party. En route they had several encounters with the Communists and had to seek the assistance of puppet troops to escort them. Forced to walk a great part of the way owing to lack of transport, they were occasionally able to hire a wheelbarrow or a donkey. Chen did not stand the trip well and "Prosperous Year" eventually hired a mule litter for him and the baggage. The going was hard; roads gave way to goat-paths as they got into the hilly country. It rained incessantly and at the end of each day's march their clothes were wet through. More often than not the only change they had was also wet. Of one thing Li was quite certain: never again would he travel with Mr. Chen. In his opinion he ought to be shot.

Mr. Chen had brought enough heroin to last him for the trip and, sustained by this, he managed to get along reasonably well by donkey and by litter until they came to a river in flood. Here a small ferry boat was operated for foot passengers. "Prosperous Year" and Chen crossed by ferry, leaving the mule litter to cross by the ford. Stripping off his clothes, the muleteer coaxed the leading mule of the litter into the swiftly flowing current. As they approached the centre of the river the water rose to the level of the shafts. Realising that he could not turn and go back, the muleteer struggled to keep the animals on their feet and at the same time was gradually swept clown the river. The leading animal stumbled and in a moment both man and beast were swept off their feet by the current. In the struggle, the leading mule broke loose from his harness and, again finding his feet, reached the bank on the opposite shore. The litter and the remaining mule parted company, and by the time the animal had got across, the litter was well on its way floating downstream.

During this performance Chen had become more and more agitated, shouting advice alternately with curses to the muleteer. When the second mule broke loose from the litter, Chen, fully clothed, waded into the river in a vain attempt to reach it. Of slight build and of little strength, he soon became exhausted and was swept off his feet. Both "Prosperous Year" and the ferryman followed down the river-bank and, quickly running to a point below Chen, they joined hands for support and, wading into the swiftly flowing waters, succeeded in grabbing the struggling wretch as he passed. Between them they half carried, half dragged him to the ferryman's hut, stretched him out on the brick bed and gave him some hot tea.

In the meantime the litter, minus the bedding and

pillows, had drifted to the river-bank some two miles downstream. As Chen began to take an interest in life again, his only concern was for the litter. On hearing that it had been retrieved, it was all "Prosperous Year" and the ferryman could do to keep him from struggling to his feet. He must go to it. By dint of force and persuasion they managed to keep him on the bed, knowing full well he was in no state to walk a couple of miles. Late that afternoon the litter arrived. In a moment Chen was up and, rushing to it, scrambled inside. Feverishly he searched again and again the over-lapping seam formed by the join of the two straw mats that made the roof. Dazed and shaking, he crawled out, muttering to himself, "It's lost, it's lost," and stretching himself out once again on the brick bed, he burst into tears.

Eventually "Prosperous Year" extracted from him the information that his precious stock of heroin for the journey, purchased in Hsuchow, had been wrapped in oiled silk and secreted in the hood of the litter. Without this he was worse than useless. That afternoon he refused to move and the others had no recourse but to spend the night at the ferry. Next morning, pale and shaking, he was eventually installed in the litter. Fortunately the worst of the journey was over, but during the next three weeks until they arrived at Chung-king, «Prosperous Year», alternately bullying and humouring him, went through hell, though by the time they reached Chungking, Chen seemed definitely to have improved. In Chungking he was kept so short of funds that it was impossible for him to buy any more of the drug.

On arrival in Chungking «Prosperous Year» handed our reports to Li Tze-lien, who had been there for over a year as the representative of the Fifteenth, and together they called on the American Embassy to deliver these letters. A friend of ours in the Embassy introduced them to Billy, and "Prosperous Year" was called upon to make reports on the latest situation in Shantung for the O.S.S. Little notice was taken of Chen, who spent most of his time in the hotel or visiting friends.

As an ex-internee from Weihsien, Billy Christian was naturally particularly interested in the scheme and was determined to do what he could to help. He succeeded in getting his own organisation interested and then commenced to work on the network of officialdom that covered Chungking. He approached the American and British Embassies, but although both were definitely interested in the project, it was felt that nothing could be done officially; the British, however, gave two and a half million dollars to be used for relief purposes amongst the internees. Getting no financial support from the American Embassy, Billy managed to wheedle half a million dollars from the American Air Ground Aid Service. The Red Cross agreed to donate the medical supplies and the O.S.S. a radio transmitter and receiver.

The most difficult part of the job was to persuade the Army to produce a plane. Working through Colonel Joe Dickey of G.2, Billy was introduced to General Chennault of "Flying Tigers" fame, who, convinced of the importance of the scheme, finally agreed to loan a B-24 for the job. It was a brand-new plane which had just come over the "Hump" and was worth a million U.S. dollars. Originally it had been intended to start back from Kunming, but it was later considered that security at that point was had and Chengtu was in the end chosen as the base for the take-off.

The supplies had already been flown to Chengtu, but when Billy arrived he found that some colonel, on inspecting the warehouse, had asked what these packages were and to whom they were consigned. Naturally, being a top secret, they were not labelled "For Weihsien Concentration Camp", and as the lieutenant in charge could not give a sufficiently lucid explanation for the presence of these much-needed medical supplies, the colonel ordered their immediate transfer for the use of a Chinese hospital in Sian. With the expedition scheduled to start and the most valuable part of the supplies gone, there was some possibility of the whole affair falling through unless the medical supplies could be replaced immediately. The plane could not be held at our disposal indefinitely.

But Billy, having pushed the plan to this stage, was determined to see it through to a successful conclusion. With the help of Captain Benny, of Chengtu, he succeeded in obtaining a further supply of vaccines and inoculations, flown over the "Hump" from India direct to Chengtu in one day. Thirty Chinese girls worked all night packing the medicines and by the following day everything was ready.

But once again there was delay. It was considered unwise to declare the contents and destination of the plane and they were held up with clearance difficulties on the "weight and balance" declaration which had to be completed before they could leave. Explanations were radioed here and there and at four-thirty the following afternoon, 12th December, the plane cleared the field. Having seen it off, Billy retired to the mess for a well-earned drink and a nap.

The B-24 was under the command of Hightower, with Etheridge as co-pilot and Cunningham as radar operator, who, with three sergeants and a corporal, made up the crew. An Army observer accompanied them, together with "Prosperous Year" and Mr. Chen. Passing over Sian, the capital of Shansi, they made for Tsinan at around 20,000 feet and from there flew north-east to the Gulf of Chili, where they located the common estuary of the Wei and Chiao rivers. From this point they flew directly south for thirty miles and dropped "Prosperous Year", Chen and the packages at 11.30 P.m. The round trip was about 2100 miles — the plane was loaded to capacity with 3360 gallons of gas.

It was not until the end of the war that we learned the full details of the return trip. Billy had spent the night at the airfield anxiously awaiting news; radio advice had been received of the successful dropping, and they were reported on the return flight. At six-thirty Billy was awakened and advised that the plane was coming in. There was thick fog but they hoped to find an opening in which to land — the fog did not lift, however, and as the field was littered with B–29s ready to take off on a bombing expedition, they could not risk a chance of damaging one. The fog failed to clear and eventually, with a shortage of gas, they signalled that they were abandoning ship: that was the last heard of them. The course was set for a nearby mountain and the crew jumped. No sooner had they done so than the starboard motor gave out and the plane commenced to circle, endangering the parachutists. It continued its circling flight and within less than fifteen minutes had crashed into a Chinese village, killing eight people. The crew landed in safety with nothing worse than a couple of broken ankles.

"Prosperous Year" told us that when they arrived at the target it had been agreed that Chen should jump first. He was given final instructions and the trap-door was opened, but at the crucial moment his courage failed him. He was pushed out.

«Prosperous Year», bidding goodbye to the occupants of the plane, jumped out after him. Clutching his release cord as the wind and the noise of the plane filled his ears, he counted five, pulled the cord and nothing happened. His heart seemed to stop; frantically he tugged at the grip and this time it came away in his hand, and then suddenly his descent was arrested. Floating gently down and swinging from side to side, he could still hear the plane in the distance. There was a strong wind and it was snowing. Everything seemed so quiet after the noise of the plane. He was not afraid now and tried to look for Chen. Far below he could see the large black patches of villages here and there. As he neared the ground he tried to control the parachute by pulling on the ropes. Skimming over the tree-tops he first hit a grave-mound, then a second ; again pulling on the ropes he tried to bring the 'chute under control, but the wind was too strong. Exhausted, he reached for his knife but could not get it out of the scabbard, and with his head buried in the crook of his arm, he was dragged, bumping along on his chest from one frozen sweet-potato furrow to another. Scratched, bruised and exhausted he came to rest on a barbed-wire entanglement outside a village.

It was still snowing and the white parachute had apparently not been noticed by the sentries on the walls of the village. He did not recognise the village and thought it might be a Japanese or puppet encampment. Quickly cutting him-self loose from the parachute, he tried to disentangle it from the wire, fearing that if it was left it would soon be discovered, but with the strong wind it was impossible and, following the wind to the west, he decided to run.

After about half a mile he found a road and continued west, skirting the villages. From the text on a memorial stone by the side of the road, he knew he was still east of the Chiao River. Suddenly he slipped and fell headlong into a communication trench and at once realised he was in "guerrilla" territory. Stopping near the next village, he buried all his documents under a tree and approached a small house on the outskirts. As he knocked on the door, a querulous old voice asked him what he wanted and he recognised the dialect as that of Pingtu district. He asked for a guide but was refused on the pretext that there was a sick child who could not be left, but, getting directions, he set off with the knowledge that another four miles would see him across the border into our area. There was still a heavy wind and snow falling. At last he came to the edge of the Chiao River, but the ice was not yet sufficiently strong to bear his weight and he had to struggle along the bank to a bridge, from where he made his way to the Middle School of the Four Virtues. The Principal hurriedly got him some hot water and a change of clothes. By the time he had changed and had a meal, a messenger had left for Headquarters.

Chen, who was much lighter, had been badly dragged. He had lost his boots, socks and gloves. Semi-conscious, he was found early in the morning by a farmer, dangling from the ropes of the parachute, which was entangled in a tree. The farmer, fearing to take action himself, sent for the nearest soldier. Chen was eventually cut loose, placed on a door and carried back to the village, where he was wrapped in a padded quilt and placed on a heated k'ang.

The next morning we went along with Yu-min to examine the packages, which by now had all been collected. They were in excellent condition and the only thing lost was a package of food and clothing sent by a U.S. Army colonel on the off-chance that we could get it to his daughter in camp. It took us the whole day to check over the medical supplies and we decided to have them buried for safe keeping in the event of a Japanese attack. The money we handed over to Yu-min.

The most important item to us and to the unit was the radio transmitter and receiver. Yu-min called in his radio expert and together we went over the equipment. Every-thing appeared to be in order. It was carefully repacked and transported by carrier-coolies back to our own quarters at the village of the Ch'iao family. Yu-min instructed his radio man to transfer his headquarters to our village, so that he would be able to give us any assistance required in setting up and operating it.

Fortunately I had at one time spent three years at sea as a radio operator and although I had forgotten most of the technical side of the business, I was still able to

read Morse code. The transmitter was powered by a wet storage battery and we were supplied with a hand-driven generator for charging. In due course everything was hooked up. The receiver worked perfectly and we located the stations that had been assigned to work with us. Switching over to the transmitter, we got only a faint sound out of it which gradually faded away to nothing. Switching back again to the receiver, the same thing happened. Obviously the battery needed charging. We procured relays of coolies to turn the generator and for hours on end they ground away, Arthur and I taking turns to watch over them all through the night. Again we tried but with the same results — a few moments more and the battery was dead. We repeated this for several days. Yu-min was sending messengers down from Headquarters several times a day to find out what was going on. The whole unit were anxiously awaiting the opening of direct communications between them and their American allies in Chungking.

Arthur went through all the Chinese technical books we could lay our hands on and finally we diagnosed the trouble. The shock of the drop had evidently caused a leak, and the fluid, wetting the excelsior in which the battery was packed, caused it to discharge. Having discharged, it froze. Once frozen there was apparently nothing one could do about it. We set about getting another. Messengers were sent to Tsinan, Tsingtao and Tientsin, but nothing similar could he bought. Finally we decided to try car batteries and gave orders to purchase six. It was several weeks before the first arrived, and when it did we had to set about charging it. In the meantime Yu-min had become very agitated, particularly with his radio expert, whom he blamed for not having car batteries on hand, since they had captured several Jap trucks.

During these days we saw a lot of «Prosperous Year», who had more or less attached himself to us, and whom we found to be very useful. He was enjoying a holiday which he felt he had earned, and indulging in luxurious — in fact, by guerrilla standards, riotous -- living, and he saw no reason why we should not do the same. We had only to mention to him anything that we wanted and somehow or other he managed to get it.

One evening whilst we were having dinner he dropped in to see us and to inform us that he had been appointed a "chu jen", which was the lowest form of official life. He refused dinner but sat down with us while we were finishing our meal and had a glass of wine. Groping in his pocket, he produced a small brown-paper package which he carefully opened and placed on the table it contained what appeared to be dried shrimps. Sipping the hot wine and discussing the gossip of the day, the evening soon passed.

"Yu-min," he told us, "is considering what form of title he can confer on both of you. Your position is now of vital importance to the unit and as such you are entitled to have some say in the administration of affairs. In order that you may have authority, it is necessary that you have a suitable position. He does not think that it is fitting for you as British and American subjects to hold military rank in the Chinese Army. After much consideration he has decided to confer on you the rank of Advisers to the unit. In due course you will receive official notification."

We replied that it seemed quite unnecessary to have any title at all, but if it pleased him we would accept the honour. We congratulated ourselves that we had not been put in the noxious class of "Councillors", a sop usually thrown to the "has beens" or the "just-missed-its" a collection of really rather useless people.

It was not until we had come to the end of the wine and finished the "shrimps" that we learned we had been eating dried scorpions!

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June 1944 to August 1945

CHAPTER IV

EVADING THE JAPS

Towards the end of January news was received of large Japanese forces gathering at all the surrounding garrison points. It seemed likely that there would shortly be an attack. Yu-min ordered our radio activities to cease and gave most careful and particular instructions to his radio man to see that our set was well hidden.

Trainloads of Japanese and puppet troops continued to arrive at the garrison points on the railway; everything pointed to a mopping-up on a scale hitherto unknown. The Communists had been troublesome of late and it was optimistically thought by some that perhaps it was they that the Japs were after and not the Fifteenth.

One night just after midnight we were awakened by Yu-min's radio expert with the news that a large force of Japanese were heading in the direction of our village from the east. The radio had already been packed ready for taking away, and whilst we were collecting our things it was removed. This time we again headed for the west, but we were not alone. Practically the whole population of the village were on the move with their goods and chattels. Lightly burdened as we were, we soon led the column of refugees. After three hours of plodding along the dirt road to the west, we suddenly heard the rumble of carts coming from the direction in which we were proceeding. We gave immediate warning to those following us, and everyone moved far into the fields on either side of the road, leaving a couple of men nearby to find out whether it was our own people or the enemy.

News was soon brought to us that they were refugees like ourselves fleeing from a number of Japanese troops that had crossed the Wei River from Changyi and were moving rapidly to the east. There was much consultation and argument as to whether to go north or south, with the result that the group split, some going north and others south. We went with the group to the south. Our old friend " Clear Spring " was with us and as usual was laying plans for our entertainment when we arrived at his friend's home at a village another five miles to the south. He was a wealthy merchant, had a comfortable house, and "Clear Spring" was sure he would look after us as he would a relation.

After an hour we arrived and found ourselves installed in a truly spacious room. Too exhausted for the exchange of polite formalities with our host, we spread our quilts and fell asleep. We were soon rudely awakened with the news that the Japanese were at the south gate. We had early learned to sleep fully clothed on these occasions and, stopping only to grab our hats, we were out of the house and over the wall in but a few minutes.

Our guide, a young relative of "Clear Spring", was an active and fearless youth and he knew every inch of the surrounding country. Before long we were clear of the village and were resting in some bushes close to a graveyard. He decided the best move would be to go to a nearby village where he thought there was a garrison of our own troops. Approaching the village, and telling us to remain hidden in a clump of trees, he went forward to make sure that it was still occupied by our forces and to give the password that would allow us to enter.

In the distance we heard the challenge of the sentries and our guide's reply, followed by a conversation, and in fifteen minutes he returned and we set off for the village, to find that Yu-min himself had just arrived there. He had come down from Yangchiakou, which had been occupied by the Japanese early that evening, the Headquarters having only escaped by the skin of their teeth. In revenge for the shooting of the two Japanese delegates, this village, the scene of the incident, had been set ablaze by the Japanese. Two regiments had been left in the north to stem the Japanese attack.

Yu-min was snatching a brief rest when we arrived, so we did not see him immediately, and in the meantime had a couple of bowls of hot noodles. When he awoke, he sent for us: «I am very glad that you have arrived here. I had been worrying over what had happened to you. This attack is on an unprecedented scale and it is advisable for you to remain with Headquarters." He gave orders to one of his bodyguard to prepare horses for us. "We must leave here before dawn." Whilst he was talking to us, plain-clothes intelligence men were in and out reporting to him direct on the latest movements of the Japanese. "For days I have known this attack was coming, although reports greatly underestimated the forces involved, but now they are all here, it will be easier to keep track of their movements." In a few moments the " 43rd " Regimental Commander came in to report that the advance column had left, and we moved on, with the balance of the "43rd" behind us, in a north-westerly direction, taking us up the western border of the area behind the Japanese, who were moving to the east to meet the column coming from that direction.

Reports continued to come in during the day. Three columns of Japanese were moving up northwards from their garrison on the railway; our troops had engaged them and intermittent fighting took place throughout the day. That evening we continued our march northwards

and spent the next day amongst the ruins of Yangchiakou. The Japanese had passed, leaving half the village a mass of charred ruins, but already many of the inhabitants had returned and were rescuing what they could from the debris.

During the night news came through of the defeat of the "45th" who had been opposing the Japanese in the south. After two days of fighting, outnumbered and pressed by superior armaments, heavy casualties had reduced their morale and ability to resist. They were retreating north-wards.

Nothing further was heard of this regiment until late the next morning, when one of the Company Commanders, in dust-covered civilian attire, rode into camp to announce that during their retreat they had been intercepted by a Communist force and completely routed. Those that were not killed had fled: the "45th" as such no longer existed.

A week passed and the Japanese were still with us, methodically combing the area from north to south and from east to west in their search for Yu-min and his Headquarters. Pamphlets had been issued with photographs and descriptions of Yu-min, ourselves and other members of the organisation. It had been announced that they would not leave the area until they had either captured or killed him and achieved the destruction of the Headquarters organisation.

The strain was now beginning to tell on most of us. Lack of sleep and food frayed the nerves. Yu-min, however, was standing the strain well: "The devils cannot keep this up much longer. Already they are having difficulty in finding food. We can do without sleep better than they, and as long as we have sufficient troops left to harass them at night and allow them no time to sleep, we can wear them down. As for the puppet bastards, to see the way they are joining in with the Japanese, one would think that the dragon was already dead. In many respects they are worse than their Japanese masters. It has taken the Japanese months of preparation for this attack; units have been brought from Taiyuan in Shansi, and from Tientsin. With the puppet troops there are twelve to fifteen thousand of them."

For the first ten days Japanese observation planes appeared two or three times a day. They machine-gunned not only any movement of troops that they came across, but also villages and individual peasants working in the fields. In the south, nearer to the railway, they had several small tanks in operation, but these never penetrated deeply into the area.

The beginning of the second week found us again in the south. We had been on the move most of the previous night and had arrived in a village shortly after sun-up. Here we had planned to spend the day. Dismounting, we followed Yu-min into a room and stretched out on the k'ang while various people were interviewed. Presently in came the radio expert. In a faltering and extremely nervous manner, he announced that the Japs had found our radio. Yu-min, not waiting for any further explanation, pushed back his chair. "Get out! Get out, you worthless offspring of a turtle's egg, before I shoot you." Wasting no time in apologies, the wretched man fled from the room. "Now what are we going to do? We must persevere with our own radios, using your stations and schedules. When this is over, we will send messengers again to Chungking."

An orderly appeared carrying a tray of hard dry bread, bowls of hot water and a few raw onions. "Commander, this is all I can find, but it's something; the soldiers have nothing to eat and only warm water to drink." For weeks now this had been our daily fare. We had hardly started to eat before the alarm was given. An undetected column of Japanese and puppet troops had approached to within a few hundred yards of the south gate by means of a sunken road. Halting at a distance of four hundred yards from the wall, they deployed their forces preparatory to an attack.

Yu-min ordered fifty men to accompany him and instructed the Commander of the "43rd" regiment to station his troops along the walls and prepare for the attack. As our ponies were brought the Headquarters staff galloped off down the main street to the west gate, and at the same moment the enemy opened fire on the village with trench mortars.

The west gate was barred and padlocked and no one knew who had the key. It was impossible to see what was going on in the mass of men and horses milling around the gate, with everyone shouting advice as to what to do. Finally an axe was produced, the locked cross-bar hacked through and one side of the gate forced open. Men and horses poured through — each man for himself — and galloped towards the cover of trees lining the river-bank. The first couple of hundred yards were covered from the Japs by the village wall, but as we drew into the open, so the Japs opened up on us with machine-guns and rifles. We dashed off, bending low and whipping the hell out of our horses. It was certainly the most exhilarating ride I ever hope to have. Here and there I saw an odd pony stumble and fall, or a rider slip from the saddle. We did not stop until we had crossed the frozen river and had reached the walls of a village on the other side.

We were now in puppet-controlled territory. From the vantage point of the village wall we watched the somewhat half-hearted progress of the battle. The Japanese forces spread out and surrounded the village but made no attempt to attack, being content to keep up a spasmodic trench-mortar bombardment, interspersed with machine-gun fire. "It looks to me as if they have radioed for reinforcements and are awaiting their arrival before

attacking," said Yu-min.

At about 11 A.M. two columns of reinforcements arrived. In less than half an hour we saw our troops emerge from the west gate and, in small scattered groups, make a dash for the cover of the ravines some three or four hundred yards from the walls. Many fell before they reached the Japanese lines; here their flight appeared to be checked for five or ten minutes, and then, evidently overcoming the resistance, they flowed on over the Japanese lines heading for the river-bank north of us. We moved on up the river to await them.

Yu-min was furious. They appeared to have lost a fair number of men. "If they had only waited until dark, they could have got out with half the losses." The Regimental Commander, leader of the "43rd", had felt that rather than leave Headquarters unprotected, he would have to risk the break. The dead were left where they had fallen and those whose wounds prevented them accompanying us were sent down to the village we had just left, together with a few men and sufficient funds with which to induce the villagers to look after them until they could be moved back to our area.

The few puppet troops, who had not fled from the villages that we passed, came out in a most obsequious manner to offer any assistance necessary. Here and there we gathered grain and at last descended on a comparatively large village where we halted for a meal and a rest.

This was the first visit that Arthur and I had paid to the Japanese-controlled areas and we were amazed at the poverty of the village and of the people. Many of the houses were deserted. Those of the inhabitants that remained were listless and undernourished to such an extent that they showed little interest in anything. Completely devoid of any expression of welcome or hate, they prepared food and waited on our soldiers.

We had become accustomed to sleep anywhere and at any time, whether for ten minutes or three hours. We had no bedding and slept wherever there was space to lie down, some-times one of twenty or more crowded on a brick k'ang, perhaps on a pile of grass fuel lying by the side of the cooking stove, slumped over a table, or sitting with half a dozen others on a wooden bench leaning against neighbours or the wall.

Before dark we moved on in an easterly direction and, turning north, followed the river. By midnight we crossed on the ice and, entering Chingpu, Yu-min's native village, settled down for the night.

Reports were favourable and we spent the whole of the next day there. Needless to say, everyone slept, getting up only to take food and then going back to sleep.

That evening we set off in a snowstorm for the north. It was colder than we had ever felt it before, and, restricted to the pace of the foot soldiers, the majority of us on ponies ended up by walking to keep warm. About midnight the advance column lost the way and we spent over two hours standing around waiting for them to be located. The wind seemed to sweep through our cotton-padded garments; we were practically wet through, and without gloves our hands had lost all sense of touch; our feet were frozen by the chill of the clumsy iron stirrups. Never in my life have I been more uncomfortable.

By two we were on the move again, having located the advance party, and at six in the morning we had arrived at the northernmost garrison point.

We were lucky enough to find a room with a warm k'ang and a couple of torn and filthy lice-infested quilts. Taking a chance, we removed our padded gowns, jackets and trousers and hung them up to dry. They would certainly get smoked, but whether they would dry much was doubtful. The old housewife was feeding the fire with straw-like grass, and clouds of smoke filled the room, even leaking out in grey wisps from cracks in the k'ang. But we were warm, we wanted nothing else. In less than half an hour our brick bed was full — an odd soldier or two, some of Yu-min's bodyguard, an officer and his orderly; some sleeping, others talking. Someone produced a packet of cigarettes — there were not enough to go round, so they were broken in half and shared.

Several more days passed in moving here and there with little sleep, sometimes with but a few pieces of hard bread and hot water or a bowl of beans during the day.

In spite of the turmoil, the almost continuous movement of the peasants from one village to another in their attempt to avoid the Japanese and their puppet hordes, somehow the Chinese New Year was celebrated. There was none of the customary ceremony, with fire-crackers, visiting and feasting; there were no new clothes; no one had the time or the inclination to go through with the annual cleaning of the home. Many spent the New Year as refugees, tired to the point of exhaustion, two or three families perhaps sharing one small room, with the children and the old grandparents on the k'ang, and their sons and daughters lying on the floor. But somehow they had obtained a few sticks of incense which they burned before a hastily written strip of calligraphy. Perhaps they also had a small bag of white flour, saved for months, to be made into dumplings and eaten on New Year's Day. After eating the first dumpling, one could ask the Gods to fulfil one's dearest wish. The dumplings must of necessity be small so that everyone could have at least one . . . maybe before dawn they would have to gather their few belongings and flee once more before the Japanese, but for the moment sleep . . . sleep . . . they had done all they could, the incense was burning, perhaps the New Year would bring an end to all this suffering.

Headquarters was on the move throughout New Year's Eve and during the course of the night we pulled into three villages where Yu-min stayed half an hour or so with friends. One of the houses at which we rested for a while was that of Li Tze-lien, who was now the Fifteenth's representative in Chungking. Here New Year was being celebrated in a much more impressive style. The ancestral portraits had been hung on the walls of the central hall and below the portraits was a long altar table. The air was thick with the heavy aroma of incense burning in a pewter container, flanked by pewter flower vases and candlesticks with immense red tallow candles. Before the altar, the square dining-table was piled high with sacrificial delicacies, meat, vegetables, fresh and candied fruits, sweets and nuts, spiced bean-curd and whole fish. In the centre of the table, surrounded by these appetising dishes, was a chicken. Plucked of every vestige of feathers except for the head, it was placed in a sitting position on its tail end with its legs hunched before it, and with the wings folded like arms across its breast. It was naked and revolting in the candle-light, for all the world like a shrivelled old woman.

Although the Japanese enthusiasm seemed to have lessened, it appeared that they were not going to give up. Taking it in turn, they were sending one or two columns off at a time to their nearest garrison point for twenty-four hours' rest.

By the end of the second week we were again up north, where Yu-min held a council with several of his regimental leaders and decided to move to the south and attack the railway garrisons in the hope that it would induce the Japanese to withdraw a portion of the attacking forces to guard the railway.

That night Yu-min moved south to be near the scene of action. It was a long and tedious ride. We passed a village just north of our former home, the road running around the north and west wall, little knowing that a small Japanese column had just occupied it and that they were covering us with machine-guns and rifles as we passed. We were too large a unit for them to risk an encounter, but on the other hand, had we known, they would have been easy meat for us.

We had been on the move continuously for nearly twelve days, but usually every five or six hours we had been able to snatch a little sleep, while tonight we had already been on the march for seven hours and still had at least four hours to go. One could think of little else — it seemed as if we were doomed to an eternal march. Time had no meaning; one's mind was a hot, searing blank, drugged by lack of sleep. Unable to keep his balance, occasionally someone would fall from his pony and be shaken into a temporary state of consciousness, or perhaps a foot soldier, no longer able to move one leg before the other, would lie down by the side of the road, but somehow there was always someone sufficiently awake to beat the hell out of him until he started moving again. Here and there we would pass a corpse pushed to one side of the road, and the monotony of the march was momentarily broken on one occasion by a sergeant who, mistaking one such corpse for a straggler, spent much energy and many curses on trying to beat it into action.

The monotonous clip-clop of the ponies' hooves on the frozen ground, the soothing motion of the slight swaying of one's body, had a hypnotic effect. If one opened one's eyes, the effort required to focus them on anything was too much of a strain, so one closed them again; then there would be blissful moments of unbelievable oblivion. I gave in once too often and woke with an unpleasant jolt at the feet of the following pony, after that I decided it was safer to walk.

By the third week we were a sorry-looking crowd: dirty, haggard and be whiskered, with deep circles under our red, swollen eyes. It could not go on much longer, everyone knew that. It was just a matter of which side would call it off first. All indications pointed to a weakening of the Japanese effort; already some of their troops had been withdrawn, and Yu-min decided to carry through his original plan of attacking the railway garrisons. It was not a very fierce attack, no attempt was made to enter the garrison towns, but the fortifications were peppered with machine-gun fire and a few high-explosive shells were lobbed over the walls into the towns. The following day there was a further withdrawal of the Japanese and their puppets and within the next few days they gradually withdrew completely.

For the next two or three days the inhabitants of the whole area did nothing but sleep, and it was almost a week before the full extent of the damage was known to Headquarters. At least a third of their troops had been lost, together with their equipment. A large number of domestic animals, mules, donkeys and oxen, had been either eaten on the spot or driven off to the puppet areas. Large amounts of grain had been looted and some of the machines used in the armament factories had been located, dug up and taken away. A number of soldiers and civilians had been captured, taken to the railway points and shipped off to Manchuria in forced-labour gangs. After a period of rest and recuperation, the people soon put this experience behind them. The Japanese had not, after all, achieved their objective. The Fifteenth was still in existence, although battered and bruised.

The rigours of the past few weeks had proved too much for the Vice-Commander, old Yang. Lack of sleep and exposure to the elements had combined to reduce the old soldier to a state of complete exhaustion, and within a couple of weeks he passed quietly away. The most genuine and kindly figure of the whole unit, his death was mourned by soldier and peasant alike.

Yu-min decided that there should be a "state" funeral. There had long been a "Heroes' Burial Ground" on the southern slopes of San Hu Hill where all those killed in battle were buried. The lower slopes of the hill, levelled into terraces, were planted with evergreens and fruit trees, and at the foot of the hill a memorial hall and rest-house had been built. Work was soon started on a suitable tomb on the highest terrace. A concrete chamber ten feet deep, five feet wide and ten feet long was constructed, the two end walls moulded by perfect workmanship to resemble the façade of a dwelling-house and a temple. The open doors of the former revealed a complete set of miniature furniture, and those of the temple sacrificial altars and vessels. 'Elie whole was brilliantly decorated and the two side walls were painted with the dragon and cloud design.

Invitations to the funeral had been issued to officials throughout northern Shantung and several hundred guests were expected. Enormous mat pavilions were erected, to house the guests. There was much appreciative talk of the manner in which Yu-min was honouring the old soldier. But Yu-min was not solely concerned with the burial honours; he had taken this opportunity of showing his neighbours that the Fifteenth, in spite of the recent Japanese attack, was still a power amongst the guerrilla forces. It was excellent propaganda and served the double purpose of giving Yu-min a great deal of " face " from the elaborate show and expense of the funeral, and quashing idle talk to the effect that the Fifteenth as a power had ceased to exist.

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SNATCHING A MEAL IN A PEASANT'S COTTAGE

February 1945

CHAPTER I

THE COMMUNISTS ATTACK

SOON "Prosperous Year" was told to get ready for a second trip to Chungking. With the Japanese attempt to drive through to the west along the Lung-Hai railway towards Sian, the safer and quicker route was now by rail to Peking and from there south to the capital of Shansi, Taiyuan-fu and across to Sian. We supplied him with a letter of introduction to the American Commander of the airfield at Sian, requesting his passage to Chungking by plane. We hoped that with any luck he would reach his destination within four or five weeks.

A full report of the recent Japanese raid was sent and we confirmed our previous radio message regarding the loss of the radio and codes and requested that another be sent immediately. We were now more than ever concerned with the fate of the camp. Reports over the radio told of the massacre by the Japanese of Catholic Fathers and civilians at the time of the American landing on the Philippines, where the occupation was proceeding apace. Speculation was rife as to whether China or Japan would be the scene of the next landing. We stressed the point that if the Fifteenth was to be put to any use at all in the plans for the protection of the camp, it was essential that supplies of ammunition be sent in sufficient quantities to make the visit of Allied planes worth while. Funds were urgently needed to purchase supplies for the camp and for the relief of uninterned Allied nationals. Again we recommended that liaison officers be sent with official backing and authority to act in an emergency.

We saw «Prosperous Year» off on the first stage of his journey, which would take him to the railway at Weihsien, a few days before the end of February. It had been a long, cold winter and the intense frosts that we were still experiencing were expected to kill the winter wheat. As we walked with him through the village gate and down to the footbridge that crossed the river, we pulled our grey, cotton-padded overcoats closely round us as the wind whipped away the heavy, raw mist. There was a continuous tinkle interspersed with the sharp staccato cracks and shattering of ice. Rifts in the mist revealed trees of glass. The weeping willows by the river's edge were coated with ice from their gnarled roots to the tips of their flowing branches. As the wind increased they shed their crystal sheathes, which shattered into sparkling fragments on the frozen ground. "Before the spring has turned these crystal trees to jade, I shall have returned," said «Prosperous Year», as we said goodbye to him.

The Central Government's Commission on Military Affairs had recently set up a radio station in our area with direct communications with General Tai Li's department in Chungking. They were China's "super-snoopers", the Chinese equivalent of the American O.S.S. organisation. We had made a very special effort to get along with these people; they were very uncommunicative and it was hard work, but after much perseverance we became friendly and eventually obtained permission to send messages over their transmitter direct to Chungking. They did not all reach their destination but at least an average sufficient to make it worth while got through. Through these people we set up a schedule with the American emergency landing-field close to the exiled Shantung Government's seat at Fuyang.

Although Yu-min had a fairly efficient inter-regimental radio system and a regular schedule with the Provincial Government at Fuyang, he had no direct communication with Chungking and all messages from the capital were sent through the Provincial Government's station at Fuyang, which entailed much delay. I spent hours at his various stations trying to contact our stations direct, but with little success. I did, however, get a little relaxation from American broad-cast programmes.

Regular communications with the camp had been established, but, anxious not to take undue risks, we restricted these contacts as much as possible and all messages exchanged between us were in code. We made use of a man who was employed by the Japanese as a camp carpenter. Our communications were written on the finest silk, folded into a small pellet and wrapped in contraceptive rubber. In order to take one of these into camp, the carpenter would place the pellet up his nose or hold it in his mouth, and, having entered the camp, he was closely followed by de Jaegher or Roy Tchou, who anxiously waited for him either to blow his nose or spit. The return message, written on a piece of Mrs. Tchou's discarded silk undies, was concealed in the same manner.

On one occasion when the Japanese guard asked our messenger to open his mouth, he had to swallow the pellet. Unable to bring it up again, he got Roy into a secluded corner, confessed the trouble, and grudgingly agreed to wait while Roy rushed over to the hospital for a little harmless medicine to assist him. He returned with about a third of a glass of castor oil. Late that afternoon just before the gates closed, a very sorry-looking Chinese shuffled towards the gate, followed by a Japanese urging him to hurry. Passing Roy, he "hoiked", and spat a mouthful of saliva at him, much to the amusement of the Japanese guard, who evidently took it as an expression of his contempt for the foreign devils.

By the middle of March, Yu-min had completed the redistribution and reorganisation of his forces, but in spite of anything that he could do, there was no getting away from the fact that his unit had been vitally hit by the recent Japanese expedition. Stocks of ammunition had been seriously depleted, much valuable equipment had been lost and production of arms and ammunition held up, as the factories were not yet in a position to resume manufacture.

We were greatly disturbed by the growing Communist threat. Since the American landing in the Philippines there had been a marked increase in Communist activity in Shantung, which, it was quite evident, was based on a policy of expansion, particularly towards the coast.

The exiled Shantung Government sent a representative on a very "hush-hush" mission to advise guerrilla leaders of the type of co-operation expected of them, should there be an Allied landing in their vicinity. Both the Communists and the guerrillas had in mind the expectation that the group first on the spot to receive the Americans would be handed large supplies of ammunition and up-to-date armament. So far the Communists obviously were winning.

Yu-min was also very much aware of the Communist threat, but he had the confidence in the Fifteenth that Arthur and I lacked. We regarded the threat to our own area as part of their policy of expansion, whereas Yu-min was inclined to consider it more of a personal move against the Fifteenth.

Our impression of the Communists was largely coloured by our personal experiences. We knew that they had on occasions harassed the Japanese garrisons and lines of communications in much the same way as we had, and there was no doubt in our minds that their policy left no room for compromise with the Japanese, as did that of certain so-called guerrillas. But on the other hand, the record of the Fifteenth had been as clean as that of the Communists in so far as their Japanese policy went, and yet we knew the latter were as intent upon wiping out the Fifteenth as they were the Japanese.

They invariably took advantage of Japanese mopping-up expeditions against the Fifteenth to knife us in the back at every available opportunity, so that whenever the Fifteenth were attacked, they had always to deal with both the Japanese and the Communists.

This triangular warfare, Japanese v. Guerrillas and Communists, Communists v. Japanese and Guerrillas, and Guerrillas v. Japanese and Communists, had a very stultifying effect on the Chinese war effort against the Japanese.

How much attention the Shantung Communists paid to their government's policy as issued from Yenan is, of course, doubtful. That there was considerable local freedom of action there is no doubt, but on the other hand, the united policy adopted by the Communists immediately after the Japanese surrender was identical with that shown by the Shantung Communists throughout the latter four years of the war.

The Communist problem was nothing new to Yu-min; years of personal experience had acquainted him with their methods of warfare, and of recent years he had come to regard them with as much hatred as the Japanese. His propaganda department were well versed in Communistic methods of approach and had established strong counter-propaganda measures, but these were not entirely necessary, as the general trend of the people in Yu-min's area was strongly anti-Communistic. There were few large land-owners and there were remarkably few peasants who did not own their own land. They had been well indoctrinated with the principles of the National war against Japan and were proud of the part they were playing in it.

As far as the guerrilla leaders went, reports from other districts, and their own living conditions, confirmed that Yu-min was just in his demands. In fact, there was literally no place in their way of life for the Communist doctrine, and for this reason the Communists had never succeeded in getting a footing even on the borders of Yu-min's area. So he had little to fear from his own people, which made the problem of the Communists purely a military one.

There could be no question of hit and run with them as with the Japanese. Yu-min selected three of his garrison towns, north, east and west, and these he commenced to build into impregnable fortresses. Thousands of labourers were recruited and, with continuous work from dawn till dark, the existing walls were strengthened and enlarged, reaching a height of thirty to forty feet and a width of five to six feet. Solid granite machine-gun emplacements were built into these mud walls, with as many as six gun-emplacement levels at each of the four corners, making a veritable fortress of granite. Houses adjacent to the walls were razed as a preventative against fire, supplies of ammunition and food were stored in specially constructed underground caverns, and additional wells were dug. Day after day for months the work went on.

The Japanese, apparently satisfied with the drubbing they had so recently administered, left the Fifteenth severely alone, and Yu-min, engrossed with his anti-Communist preparations, made no attempt to disturb them.

A strong point of the Communists was their ability to travel great distances in a remarkably short time and to

be in a condition to go into immediate action, returning to their bases with equal rapidity. In short, they were in a better state of mobility and training than the guerrilla forces, and with this in mind, Yu-min introduced intensive training for his men, forced marches followed by sham battles, daily runs before dawn to the top of San Hu mountain and back.

Lack of ammunition was still one of the most serious deterrents to any engagement, whether with the Communists or the Japanese, and frantic efforts were made to purchase all available supplies. With the increase in Communist pressure not only on Yu-min, but on the neighbouring "grey" units, there had been more willingness on the part of the latter to assist anyone, whatever his creed, provided aid was given in turn to ease from their shoulders the burden of the Communist pressure. Taking advantage of this, Yu-min succeeded in obtaining additional supplies of ammunition but not in large enough quantities to alter the situation very materially.

Within a month the Communists had entered into the final stage of their operations to surround the Fifteenth on three sides. Dealing lightning blows to the neighbouring "grey" units, they gradually pushed forward their policy of isolating the Fifteenth.

Until now we had been rather in the dark as to the relations between the Allies and the Communists, and had been reluctant to expose the full extent of the Communist activities in and around our area for fear that we might be considered as being against the policy laid down. But gradually, as the situation developed, we felt that we had no alternative but to throw our entire weight behind Yu-min. We dispatched a special report by messenger to the airfield at Fuyang, with instructions that he be passed on to Chung-king by the first available plane. Explaining the entire situation and its relation to the internees, we pleaded for supplies of ammunition.

Within a few weeks after the Japanese withdrawal, we left Headquarters and returned to our original quarters, but this time without the somewhat dubious pleasure of the company of our former host, Mr. Chang. We chose to return to this village because of its central location in relation to the various government offices scattered in the nearby villages, and also because of its proximity to the military radio station. We had the whole place whitewashed and made it as clean and comfortable as possible. In addition, we each bought a bicycle as the most suitable means of getting around the countryside. The months spent with Headquarters had made us many friends and hardly a day passed that we did not have visitors.

One afternoon Yu-min, who had established his Head-quarters for a few days at a village about a mile away, sent a letter asking us to come over immediately to meet a friend from Chungking. We arrived, to be introduced to a Mr. Meng, a member of the O.S.S. He had been sent by Billy Christian from Chungking to see how we were getting along and to look over the Fifteenth. Meng appeared to be a very sound man, and although he could not tell us much as regards future plans, we spent several useful days with him.

He came to stay with us, and Arthur took him on a visit to the munitions factories and the various Regimental Head-quarters, while I drew up another report to Chungking which he was to take back with him. He had come by way of the northern route through Taiyuanfu and Peking, — the same way that we had told «Prosperous Year» to follow. As we now had connections with the airfield at Fuyang, we gave him a letter to the Commanding Officer there, at the same time sending a radio message to Christian to arrange, if possible, for a plane to meet him there and fly him back to Chungking without delay.

Yu-min gave Mr. Meng a wonderful reception and he was naturally fêted wherever he went. Everyone realised that much depended upon what sort of report he would make on his return.

Before leaving he expressed his concern to us over the Communist situation: «It needs little intelligence to see what the Communists are up to, not only in Shantung but throughout all the coastal provinces of China. No longer is there any pretence at co-operation in the war effort against Japan. The longer the war drags on, the greater the opportunity it gives them to consolidate their positions. They are anticipating an American landing on the China coast and they believe that, if they are there to meet them, they will, through co-operating with the Americans, emerge from the ruins of China a stronger party than the Nationalists. They have done much to impress our Allies, particularly the Americans, with their propaganda. But then, of course, so many of the Americans that matter have been basing their judgment of the Communists only on what they have found when visiting their Headquarters at Yenan. True, they have done much good work in the rescue of American aviators shot down by the Japanese, but many of those rescued are, after all, but simple farmer boys, and readily taken in by the astute Communist lies, and it is not altogether surprising that they are much impressed with their treatment. Yu-min and this unit will go the way of his neighbours unless we can get ammunition to him."

The next morning we accompanied Meng to Headquarters to partake of the farewell feast that had been arranged for him. It was an enjoyable party and, as was to be expected, most of the conversation centred around the hopes and future plans of the Fifteenth. The feast ended and all accompanied Meng as far as the village gate, where a mounted escort awaited him. Yu-min was greatly pleased when Meng told him that he was genuinely amazed at the equipment and clothing of his troops.

"Why," he exclaimed, "they are better turned out than many of the National troops that one sees around the capital. This has indeed been an eye-opener for me. When I left Chungking, my friends commiserated with me over the hardships and discomforts that I should have to endure amongst the country bandits, whereas I have travelled in the utmost comfort and have eaten of delicacies that are unprocurable in the capital." As we returned to Headquarters we all felt that this man had left with a favour-able impression and would do all he could to help us.

With the capitulation of Germany in Europe, the occupation of the Philippines and the attack on Okinawa, the Japanese in our part of the world were very subdued. The last six months had seen greatly increased activity by the American planes along the Tsinan–Tsingtao railway ; more than half of their locomotives had been put out of action ; shipping and docks had been bombed in Tsingtao and the airfields at Tsinan and Tsingtao frequently attacked. It was more than obvious that we were getting near the end.

One morning towards the end of May an orderly arrived and asked us to come over to Headquarters as soon as convenient. We were met by Yu-min's secretary who, with a great display of secrecy, handed us a telegram in Chinese. I could hardly believe my ears as Arthur slowly deciphered it. It was addressed to Yu-min from General Tai Li, and coolly announced that we were to be prepared to receive a shipment (which would be dropped by plane) of 500,000 rounds of ammunition and seven radios with which to set up a network all along the Shantung coast. Two American liaison officers and a radio technician were to accompany the shipment. Preparations were to be made for suitable accommodation for them. We were told what signals to display and were instructed to confirm location and time at which they would be shown.

At last we had succeeded! It had taken a year, but was worth all that we had gone through. Much as it meant to us, however, it meant a great deal more to Yu-min: the difference between survival and extinction.

Yu-min, his secretary, Arthur and myself spent the next three hours discussing and drawing up the final arrangements. We dispatched a radio message confirming that a large white cloth arrowhead would be displayed on the westernmost summit of San Hu mountain from dawn until 10 A.M., pointing in the direction of the wind, from 24th May onwards. All preparations were completed and from that date both of us got up at three every morning in order to be at the appointed spot at dawn. Guards were stationed around San Hu mountain to prevent any unauthorised person from climbing the hill.

Daily reports were sent to Chungking on the weather conditions, which for the first week were most unsuitable, with heavy cloud and frequent rain-storms; but taking no chances, we made our way every morning to the mountain. Gradually the weather cleared and our hopes began to rise. We spent many a cold and dreary dawn on the hill-top, relieved every now and again by a really superb sunrise. From San Hu mountain we looked over the heart of the area with the two rivers on either side of us; huge square patches of brilliantly green young wheat and the rich brown of the newly ploughed earth. Immediately below us, nestling into the foot of the hill, thatched cottages clustered together, surrounded by a mud wall. Soon after sunrise, a light-blue haze settled over these villages as the womenfolk lighted their fires and commenced the preparation of the early morning meal.

More than a week had passed, but the weather was at last settled and we hoped that any morning now would bring the welcome drone of the planes.

Getting up one morning we found that there was a heavy misty fog. Arthur decided that it was useless and went back to bed, but having dressed, I decided to go out for a walk towards the hill. I was less than half-way there when I heard the intermittent drone of planes coming nearer and nearer from the south till they passed directly overhead, circled before they were out of hearing and returned in a south-westerly direction. This was the only morning that had been foggy in practically two weeks, and this was the day they had chosen to come! We had no further radio communication but continued our morning watch.

Three days later, before retiring to bed, we heard the explosion of hand-grenades, machine-gun and rifle fire far off to the east. The next morning, as we left the village before dawn, the sky in the east was red with flames. Passing through the village gate, we asked the watchman what had happened. "The Communists are attacking the Head-quarters of old Yen — we sent reinforcements over early last night to assist them. Let them burn! They are but Japanese puppets, they never did us a good turn." So the final links in the chain around its were being forged.

Less than a week later the Communists, gathering some thirty thousand men, began their attack on the Fifteenth. For the first few days we continued our watch on San Hu mountain, but finally, when small Communist bands began to infiltrate around the base of the hill, with resulting minor engagements with our own troops, we decided to give it up. We described the situation by radio and told of the removal of the signal to a hill some ten miles to the south-west, to which we removed our Headquarters.

Yu-min's plan of defence against the Communists was to place one regiment in each of the fortified strongholds, with enough supplies of ammunition and food to last them at least a month. To supplement the already scarce ammunition, lime-filled hand-grenades, old -fashioned cannon and even large cauldrons with which to

pour boiling water over those who dared to scale the walls, were provided. Yu-min himself retained four regiments outside these fortifications with which to make mobile attacks behind the Communist lines, and yet another regiment was stationed at Kaomi in the south-east. Immediate steps were taken to garrison the three strong-holds of Mingchiakou, Hsiaohotze and Hsinchao. Simultaneous attacks were launched on these three points by the Communists. Mingchiakou was the first to fall after only three days, but more than half of the garrison forces succeeded in escaping. Hsiaohotze fell the next day. With the fall of these two strongholds the combined forces of the Communists were centred upon Hsinchao, which was under the command of our friend Chao Chih-yi.

THE FORTIFIED ANTI-COMMUNIST BASE AT HSIAO-HOTZE

Yu-min tried in every possible way to send reinforcements to relieve Chih-yi, but was unsuccessful. After eight clays and nights of almost continuous attack, Yu-min radioed to Chih-yi to retreat rather than lose further men. Chih-yi, however, still had supplies of ammunition and refused to leave. For three more days he fought off continued attempts to scale the walls; finally, with the end of his ammunition in sight, he managed to force an opening through the encirclement and succeeded in breaking his way out to safety with about two-thirds of his troops. Now the whole of the northern half of the area was in the hands of the Reds.

On the fall of Hsiaohotze we had again radioed Chung-king and advised them of a further removal of the indication mark for the planes, this time to within ten miles of the rail-way, but by now our hopes of success were lessening. It was more than likely that General Tai Li's "super-snoopers» had advised him of the inadvisability of proceeding with the plan.

Piecemeal, the Communists worked on the forces of the Fifteenth. Here and there isolated groups were decimated in battle or surrounded and captured. There were losses too on the Communist side, but the overwhelming superiority of their forces made such losses of negligible importance in their slow but steady sweep across the area. Yu-min seemed to have lost his usual initiative, and became hesitant to attack when the opportunity arose.

The first intimation we had that all was not well was from Colonel Huang (the Shantung Government's Military Representative) one evening when we were having dinner with him in the garden of his temporary quarters at a village far south on the east bank of the Wei River. In these days most people of importance kept one eve on the Wei River, on the other side of which was the puppet territory of the Weihsien Commander there at least was a temporary haven. "Yu-min has not handled this situation in his usual capable manner. Now, if I had been in his position I should have led my full force to attack the Communists before they had had a chance to surround and attack our fortified positions. By doing this, he might at least have beaten off the threat for the time being. And with the situation as it is who knows what the morrow will bring? It is evident that the Japanese are tottering. They may surrender at any time. If Yu-min was not successful in beating back the Communists, then he could have fallen back to his fortified garrisons. There is no doubt in my mind that this would have delayed the Communist advance to our certain advantage." During the next few days we heard similar recriminations from others of the Head-quarters staff and we could see for ourselves that there was something in the argument.

We were now being pressed at uncomfortably close quarters, and finally one evening, as we were sitting around the courtyard discussing the latest news, the chief of the Military Supply Department came along and said that the Communists were within a few miles of the village and that the only alternative was to cross the Wei River into puppet territory. Expecting that it would be only a temporary move, we packed a box with our personal belongings, arranging for it to be buried, and, after a meal and some wine, set off.

The road from the village to the river was but a rough track over the sand and was blocked with refugees. Cartloads of household furniture and personal belongings; men, women and children; horses and donkeys, pigs and goats, sheep and dogs; here and there a mounted soldier — these all added to the confusion. Gradually the mass of humanity converged on the wide sands of the Wei River. There had been little rain of late and the water was not very deep. A human chain of soldiers had been thrown across the river to assist the women and children, and to see that as few as possible of the animals were drowned. Slowly the crowds began to cross. Horses and carts trundled down to the water's edge, children piled on the shafts and on top of the loaded carts; men, stripped, with

their clothes tied round their heads and with sheep or goats under their arms, waded over and then returned for their pigs. The women, stripped to their undergarments, carried hens and ducks or other personal possessions, living up to the proverb that a Chinese woman's most treasured possessions are her chickens and her nephews and nieces. The crossing took some hours. We too did what we could to assist before we were taken by one of our friends to a nearby village.

Conditions continued to deteriorate rapidly during the next week and it was soon obvious that we would not he able to go back to our area for many a day. We roamed about the puppet territory with Headquarters and the "43rd". There was talk amongst some at Headquarters that there was only one solution co-operation with the Japs to drive out the Reds.

We soon realised that it was unwise to stay on indefinitely in this puppet area; at times we had been forced to within a few miles of Weihsien and the camp. If this continued, the Japanese sooner or later would get to hear of our whereabouts and that would be the end of it as far as we were concerned. We had very little chance of escape. If, for instance, there was co-operation with the Japs, where should we come in? Deciding that it would be better to be with the Reds than to fall into the hands of the Japanese, we began to make plans for a get-away. Much as we were loath to do it, we felt that it would be impossible for us to communicate our ideas to Yu-min or any others of the Headquarters staff. They would not agree and might even attempt to keep us under surveillance. We knew that once we had crossed the Wei River, we should have no difficulty in locating the Reds.

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CHAPTER II

AN EMBARRASSING POSITION

WITH the Communists' sweep through Changyi, Wang Shang-chih had been brought out of his place of imprisonment, and was escorted to a village on the west bank of the Wei River, where he stayed for several days, still under guard.

Considering it an appropriate opportunity, one of his old and trusted friends came out as negotiator and, calling on Yu-min, advised the liberation of Wang, whose military experience and ability would at this time be of great assistance to the unit. Yu-min, disconsolate and not a little depressed at the turn of events, agreed to see Wang Shang-chih, and a meeting of reconciliation took place between them. Yu-min criticised himself for the plight to which he had brought the Fifteenth, and Wang on his part shed tears of repentance. New plans were discussed between them for the best way of dealing with the Communists. Suddenly, amidst the reconciliatory atmosphere, Wang Shang-chih seized a gun from one of the bodyguards, forced his way out of the room, and, mounting a horse that was waiting for him, galloped away without hindrance.

That there was some conspiracy afoot was obvious. A few days later we heard that Wang had visited the puppet commander at Weihsien and had gone on further to the west to Changlo, where he stayed pending further developments.

With Wang again a free man, there was much speculation as to what the next development would be. Secretly, one or two of his old friends visited him at Changlo, returning to spread rumours of his possible return and the advisability of seeking Japanese co-operation in regaining control of their native soil. As these rumours grew, so we became more uneasy in our own position.

Several months previously we had received a communication from the camp, advising us that they had been approached by the Communists in very much the same manner as they had first been approached by the Fifteenth, with an offer of rescue and safe transportation to Yenan, the Communist capital. We advised a polite refusal but at the same time considered it desirable for them to keep the channel of communication open. With the deterioration in the situation we sent in a message asking the camp to re-establish communications with the Communists and, if possible, to advise them of our intended move. It was quite impossible for us to get into touch with them as long as we were so closely attached to Headquarters.

Unfortunately the situation developed with such rapidity that we could not afford to await developments from negotiations between the camp and the Communists, and decided to take the risk and leave before any further complications arose.

The Communists were already pressing hard and had crossed the river in several night attacks on the puppet garrisons to the north of us. If this continued, we should find ourselves pushed to the very outskirts of Weihsien city. Our Chinese friends had a fair chance, but we, as two foreigners, were in an impossible position. The facial characteristics of the average Westerner are so completely different from those of an Asiatic that disguise is practically impossible at anything under twenty yards. In the winter we used to wind woollen mufflers over the lower part of our faces and with the aid of a Chinese fur hat and dark glasses could get away with it, but in the summer it was another proposition.

From the point of view of the camp, if, as it appeared, the Communists were going to succeed in occupying the whole of this part of Shantung, it would be just as well if we did go over to them. After all, they were Chinese and appeared just as interested in looking after the welfare of the internees as the Fifteenth, particularly in view of the propaganda value.

The evening we chose for our get-away commenced with a thunderstorm and a great deal of heavy rain. For lack of other quarters, our orderly was sleeping in our room, and it was difficult to get rid of him. We proposed this mission and that, but he always knew the answers or else came back before we had completed our arrangements. In the end we sent him off to the other end of the village with a letter to the radio station, requesting certain information which we knew would take some time to obtain. It was soon after eight when he left; the sky had cleared and, in spite of the now heavy going after the rain, we decided to carry through our plan.

Taking some dry bread and dismantling the inner tubes from our bicycles to assist us in swimming across the river, we crept cautiously out of our quarters and made for the village wall. It was very dark but as we approached we could see the outline of bushes on top of the wall against the sky. We tried to locate our sentries but there was no movement. We knew only too well that if any of the patrols on the wall had as much as a glimpse of a moving figure in the vicinity, they would shoot. We

could still see no sign of anyone and decided to take a chance. Climbing up the inside wall by the help of bushes, we slithered down the outside slope and dashed for the cover of the kaoliang crops.

The moon was not yet up but we had a rough knowledge of the surrounding country. We knew that if we continued directly east, sooner or later we would come to the river. As we were in puppet territory we could not follow the roads, which meant cutting across country. Checking on the stars, we plodded through kaoliang, acres and acres of it, over rough fields and untilled land, stumbling and falling into ditches. It was hard going, the ground was wet and slippery, and it was not long before we were soaked through from the wet kaoliang, our hands and knees cut and smarting from continual pushing through the rough leaves.

We had been going for five hours before, coming to the top of a ridge; we saw below us the wide expanse of the river, a broad silver band under the light of the moon. Considerably heartened, we pushed on down the ridge towards the river-bed, fortunately at a familiar spot, for we immediately realised that we were too far to the south. There were still small detachments of our own troops across the river from this point, and in order to avoid running into them we retraced our steps inland again for about a mile with the intention of crossing the river further north. We continued parallel with the river, heading in a northerly direction. Guided here and there by a familiar landmark, we had a fairly good idea as to where we were and, as the sky began to pale in the east, we turned directly towards the river.

Drawing near the bank of the river we took cover in the thick kaoliang crops, and slowly pushing our way through we at last emerged into a clear space about fifty yards from the river's edge. On the very edge of the bank were large shrubs. As we came out of the kaoliang we noticed that the wet ground between us and the river was covered with footprints. We decided that they were probably the result of a Communist raiding party landing at this point during the night, or a Japanese unit leaving for an attack on the Communists on the other side of the river. We were tired by then and, I suppose, rather careless, but drawing our revolvers, we followed the well-muddied track to the edge of the river. I was leading, with Arthur following about ten yards behind. Suddenly, from behind the bushes, up sprang a very sleepy-looking Chinese bestrung with leather straps from which dangled pistols and belts of ammunition. He was as surprised to see us as we were to see him. For a moment we both stood still looking at each other in amazement, and then he shouted. Half turning, we ran for the nearby kaoliang, watching him as we went. Simultaneously heads began to pop up from behind the bushes all along the river-bank in the immediate vicinity. A Japanese ran after us, shouting and firing haphazard shots; others followed. Reaching the kaoliang, we took a couple of pot-shots at them and dived for cover. We ran as hard as we could, into one patch and out at the other side, across open space and into more kaoliang. We continued to run, keeping under cover as much as possible, until we were literally exhausted and somewhat scared. Behind us there was a good deal of shooting and shouting, but it gradually died down without getting any nearer. Knowing that we were armed, it was most unlikely that they would dare to follow us into the kaoliang; for all they knew, we might be two of a hundred.

Having recovered our breath, we found we were too near the edge of the crops and, moving further into the middle, we cut down stalks to make a pallet and lay down to rest. In about an hour we heard both rifle and machine-gun fire which was soon joined by a light cannon. For the best part of half an hour a one-sided battle seemed to be going on, probably for our benefit. Evidently we had stumbled upon a Japanese and puppet party from the nearby garrison who were guarding the river against a possible attempt by the Communists to cross. We thought it unlikely that they would have recognised us as foreigners; they had probably taken us for Communist infiltrators and were putting up the present racket to let us know that they were on our tracks.

As the sun mounted in the sky, so the heat intensified, and with the sun directly overhead we had little or no shade. The recent rain had left the atmosphere humid and heavy and we were soon soaked with perspiration. At noon we chewed up some of the dry bread, but without water it was difficult to swallow.

At the first signs of dusk, we stealthily made our way towards the river. From the glimpse that we had had that morning, it appeared to be flooded from bank to bank, and now as we approached we heard the roar of the water. Coming into full view of the river, we realised that it would be sheer foolishness to swim across. Reluctantly we gave up the idea; we could not possibly wander about the country, infested as it was with puppet and Japanese troops, waiting for the river to fall, which might take days. Our immediate necessity was water: the river water, thick with yellow mud, was out of the question and we set off to find something to drink. After half an hour of walking directly inland, we found ourselves amongst cultivated market gardens, evidently on the outskirts of a village. Soon we were stumbling across a melon field towards a crude mud hut, which acted as a shelter for the person whose job it was to watch over the melon crop. The hut was empty, but it smelt of tobacco smoke as if only recently vacated. Looking round outside the hut we came across an earthenware container, filled to the brim with water. A half-gourd dipper floated on the top. Greedily we scooped up dippers full of this brackish but deliciously cool water, and greatly refreshed, we decided to look around in the hope that we would find someone.

Soon we came upon another hut. "Anybody there?" we asked. But there was no response. We pushed open the

door and immediately sensed that it was not deserted. Feeling around in the darkness, my hand came to rest on a leg. "Who are you?" I asked. "Speak." "Lao pai hsing," came the reply, meaning "a peasant". "Good! Do not be afraid — we are friends." Evidently reassured, the man got up and followed us outside. "Where do you come from?" we asked him.

"I am a native of that village just over there. The Communists are about tonight and I thought I would be safer here. Who are you and where do you come from?"

We explained that we were with the Fifteenth but had lost our unit, and asked him to guide us to the road that led back to the village from which he had come.

"No, no, I dare not do that. I do not know the way and it is too dangerous. Ah! Here come my friends, perhaps they will help you." We heard the squelch of footsteps to our right and, drawing our pistols, stepped back from the hut.

Presently two men approached. "Old Liu," they asked, "Who are you talking to?"

"It is nothing — just two of our friends who were passing. Come, have a smoke."

"What is the news from the village? I have not been back there today." "Indeed, these are troublesome times for the likes of us. The Japanese, the puppets, the guerrillas, and now the Communists . . .", and so they rambled on.

Convinced now that they were nothing but peasants from a neighbouring village, we stepped forward.

They were afraid, but the older man whom we had first met reassured them. We sat down to share their pipe, and talked, and eventually worked around to the question of one of them guiding us, but they steadfastly refused. Well, how about something to eat? Yes, perhaps that could be arranged. And after much more talk, one of them agreed to try and get back to his home in the village to fetch some food.

In an hour he returned with warm bread and a kettle of hot water. We felt much better and, getting detailed directions from them, set off on the return trip, having decided there was no alternative.

This time we decided that if we could find the road we would take a chance and follow it. We did eventually, and after a little while recognised it as a road we had travelled on several occasions during the last ten days, so felt confident of being able to find our way back. We had gone almost half-way and were walking up a steep ascent when, as we turned a slight bend, there was a sudden commotion at the edge of the crops overlooking the road. Several figures dashed back into deeper cover away from the road. Simultaneously there was an explosion some twenty yards in front of us — a hand-grenade. We disappeared into the kaoliang on the opposite side of the road. Ahead of us was a village and we were forced to make a wide detour, during which time hand-grenades exploded in all directions in the vicinity of the village. "We seem to have started something," said Arthur. "They are probably blowing each other up in the excitement." West of the village we got back on to the road.

About seven that morning we arrived back at the village from which we had started. Headquarters had moved four hours earlier and none of the villagers, of course, knew where they had gone. Thoroughly worn out, we went back to our old billet and called the landlord. We could not stay there without the protection of our unit, otherwise the puppets or the Japs would be after us in no time, but, on the other hand, it was useless to wander around the countryside looking for Headquarters.

We asked the landlord to call the village headman, taking a chance that he would play square, and not hand us over to the puppets or the Japanese. They soon returned, and the headman was very polite and said that although he did not know where the Fifteenth had gone, he could find out and would send word to them that we were here. In the mean-time we could rest assured that no harm would come to us and he would prepare us a meal. We were soon comfortably full of hot noodles and fast asleep on the k'ang.

In the late afternoon we were awakened by a couple of Yu-min's bodyguards who had been sent to escort us back to Headquarters.

Somewhat shamefaced and considerably embarrassed, we went in to see Yu-min, who, with some of our other friends, was just sitting down to a meal. He was so relieved to see us that there were no recriminations whatsoever; most of our friends seemed to think our escapade a great joke and it was weeks before we heard the end of it. Others, with very obvious tact, avoided mentioning it at all.

We had arrived apparently at an appropriate time, as preparations were going ahead to return to our area by cutting in at the southernmost point. Everyone was very cheerful at the prospect and from our point of view it was fortunate, as it detracted attention from our little adventure.

Soon after dark we set off, everything going smoothly until we came to the ford across the river just north of Tsoshan station. The water was still very high and running swiftly. The foot soldiers had to strip completely, tie their clothes and ammunition to their rifles which they held above their heads, and wade across. Even those on horseback found it necessary to take off their trousers and tie them round their necks. Half the column were about over and most of the horses were in mid-stream followed by the balance of the foot soldiers, when rifle fire broke out some distance up the bank towards which we were heading. Bullets cut into the water around us or ricocheted off in uncertain directions. We broke

formation and urged our horses on towards the bank. One or two of them stumbled and submerged their riders. I can well remember the picture made by Yu-min's minute secretary, thrown off his horse, floundering in about five feet of water and being supported every now and again by a huge six-foot soldier wading alongside him, one hand under the secretary's chin and the other holding up his rifle and clothes. I had a couple of soldiers hanging on to the tail of my horse. As soon as our men reached dry land, they opened fire without stopping to dress. In about fifteen minutes the opposition subsided and Yu-min ordered everyone to the nearest village at the double. I should like to have seen the faces of the guards on the gate as they opened to admit a crowd of naked soldiers with rifles slung over their shoulders; not to mention the Headquarters staff officers who, pant-less, rode through the portals of the village gate with the dignity of their position weighing heavily upon them, and saluting the guards as they passed.

This village, lying but a few miles from the railway, was renowned for the number of rich families who had lived there at one time and had built themselves huge residences. Yu-min was quartered in a veritable palace with numerous courtyards, vermilion pillars and carved lattice-work.

News had come through that the Japanese, alarmed by the Communists' occupation of the Fifteenth area, which brought them into too close proximity to the railway for the former's liking, had sent off an expedition in an attempt to drive them back.

As they recaptured points from the Communists, placed them in the hands of the puppet troops, and themselves with-drew, so Yu-min planned to seize the opportunity and retake such points himself. It was a bold move, but unfortunately the Japanese, on hearing that Yu-min had occupied this village, called reinforcements from a neighbouring station and prepared to attack us. Again we were forced to withdraw to west of the river.

The Japanese met with little success in their raid on the Communists now occupying our area and the situation for the Fifteenth showed no improvement. Men and officers became despondent. Frequent secret trips were made by certain Headquarters officers. There was now definite rumour of a split in the camp. One party headed by Wang Shang-chih advocated co-operation with the Japanese as the only means of winning back the area. Yu-min stood out for non cooperation. A deputation was sent to Changlo to bring Wang Shang-chih back, and on his return he soon had the backing of his old friends — with them, of course, went the soldiers under their command.

Yu-min found himself in the minority, but in no circumstances would he agree to any dealings with the Japanese. He talked it over with us many times: "For eight years I have struggled against the Japanese; for four years I have led this unit against them, and now, with the hour of victory in sight, they ask me to co-operate with them. Never will I have it said of myself or of my unit as long as I lead them, that we have co-operated with these dwarf devils. Rather than see this come to pass, I will go to Chungking. With your help I shall be able to fly from Fuyang and with your co-operation I will obtain supplies of ammunition in Chungking. Then I will return. I will not spare those who have had dealings with the Japanese."

In due course we wrote the necessary letters of introduction for him and at last all was ready. It was a depressing scene and there were few of Yu-min's friends to bid him goodbye. "We will meet again soon. Whilst I am away I have instructed our friend Chao Chih-yi to be personally responsible for your safety. He is our mutual friend and I leave you with him in the knowledge that he will protect you with his life. After I have gone you will doubtless hear many things to my discredit. Some may be true and some not, but nobody will dare say that I am a traitor." Shaking hands, he mounted his favourite horse and left the village accompanied by half a dozen of his trusted personal bodyguards and a column of one hundred men of the "43rd".

Later that evening we moved on to "Peach Blossom Village by the River" where Chih-yi made his Headquarters. We had comfortable quarters and spent the next few days in reading and bathing in the river, anxiously awaiting further developments.

Three or four days had passed when one morning a messenger arrived from Wang Shang-chin's Headquarters with a letter requesting that we pay him a visit. After some discussion with Chih-yi, he decided to accompany us, just in case there should be any treachery. As soon as we arrived we were taken to Wang Shang-chili's room, where we found him discussing the question of supplies with the head of the Military Supply Department. Dismissing everyone but his secretary, he asked us to sit down. «It is indeed a pleasure to meet you. I have followed with interest the efforts that you have made to assist my unit and I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks. As you know, it was I who opened negotiations with the camp, and although, since my return, ill-health has forced me to retire from public affairs, I never ceased to be concerned over the welfare of our Allied friends so cruelly interned by the devils. Now that I have reluctantly been persuaded to participate again in active affairs, I am anxious to know if there is anything that we can do to alleviate the suffering and hardships of our friends."

We explained to him what had been done up to date, and that we were in constant touch with the camp, and added that we would not hesitate to call upon him at any time we needed help.

We then enquired as to his immediate plans and

what our position would be in relation to them. "You have nothing to fear, I have already taken the necessary precautions. As you know, the situation occasioned by Yu-min's cowardly retreat and his subsequent flight to safety is a very grave one. We have done more than our share in the war of resistance for the past seven years, but the time has come when one must take a more practical view of things. We are beaten. We cannot continue indefinitely to rove here and there at the sufferance of the Japanese and their puppets, within areas under their control. Better is it by far to swallow our pride and make use of the Japanese for as long as it serves our purpose. Once we are back again in our own area, then we may act as we please."

Wang Shang-chili suggested that we stay around for a day or two, and he arranged quarters for us in the village. Here we met many of our old friends who had been instrumental in the return of Wang. Life was on a very much more frivolous scale in this new Headquarters. Opium and heroin were openly smoked by people who, under the Yu-min regime, had held up their hands in sanctimonious horror at the very mention of it. Sing-song girls and mah-jongg were back in favour and Japanese officials from the nearby garrison were lavishly entertained at official dinners. But we were secretly glad to see that there were nevertheless a number of familiar faces missing.

The following afternoon Wang came to pay us a visit and, after sitting down, handed us a radio message he had just received from Chungking. It was from General Tai Li stating that it was proposed to send a shipment of ammunition, and also requesting particulars of a suitable location at which to drop the packages. Again our hopes were revived, but at the same time we realised the difficulties, as we were within two miles of the Japanese garrison at Tsoshan station. A measure of understanding had been reached between Wang Shang-chih and the Japanese, but we were still uncertain how far this went. However, it seemed likely that this ammunition was being sent for use against the Communists rather than the Japanese. Wang Shang-chih felt confident that there would be no complications, and if the quantity was sufficient it might afford an opportunity of cutting the Japanese apron-strings. In due course arrangements were made and a radio message sent to Chungking, giving full particulars. Although this appeared to us to be an entirely Chinese affair, Wang Shang-chih seemed to hold us responsible, put us in charge of all the arrangements and that night entertained us with a very lavish dinner.

The location we had chosen for this dropping was north of "Peach Blossom" village, and the following morning we returned. Chih-yi and his regiment were quartered in the northern part of the village and we had rooms in the southern part. To our surprise we were awakened at daybreak by Chih-yi's personal servant, who rushed into the room and asked if we were still there. Arthur mumbled something about the advisability of his buying a pair of spectacles at the next village market, and turned over and went to sleep again. Within half an hour Chih-yi himself came in: "How relieved I am to find you! I should never have forgiven myself if he had taken you."

"What is all this about? First your servant comes, wakes us up and asks if we are still here, and now you seem surprised to see us. What has happened?"

"Didn't you hear the shots last night? Yu-min, six of his bodyguards and a few stragglers returned, overcame the guard at the north gate and forced more than half of my troops to follow him. They have gone to the east. If he had known you were here, I am sure he would have taken both of you with him."

Since Yu-ruin's departure for Chungking, Chih-yi had remained on his own. Although on friendly terms with Wang Shang-chih, he had taken good care to billet his regiment some distance from Headquarters. He had not approved of the negotiations proceeding with the Japanese and was adopting a "wait and see" policy. When news of Yu-min's daring act reached Wang Shang-chih, he picked a Company Commander well known for his hatred of Yu-min and, with two hundred troops, sent him after Yu-min with instructions to bring him back dead or alive.

By midnight a messenger returned with the news that they had caught up with Yu-min's detachment and that fighting had broken out between them. Just before dawn another messenger arrived. Chih-yi's troops, who had gone with Yu-min, had capitulated, some had been killed and many wounded. They had been disarmed and were now on their way back. Yu-min with two or three of his bodyguard had got away and it was thought that he was wounded. But the search was being continued. It was known that they were on foot and there was little chance of them getting far.

For two days we heard no news, then at last word came through. Yu-min had reached Kaomi safely. Although it was not wise to appear too jubilant, we were delighted. From Kaomi, Yu-min issued a proclamation to the effect that he had just returned from a conference with the Governor of Shantung, who had secretly returned to the province, and he had been confirmed in his position as Commander of the Fifteenth. He denounced Wang Shang-chih as a traitor deserving of capital punishment and called on his troops and loyal followers to join him at Kaomi.

At the time of Yu-min's departure it was officially announced that he had gone on a visit to the Governor of Shantung, who had recently returned to Shantung on a secret tour of inspection. During the first night of his journey he had been attacked by troops at the instigation of Wang Shang-chih, but during the attack Yu-min and his personal bodyguard escaped and succeeded in reaching the Governor's Headquarters in safety. The

Governor told him of the persistent rumours of peace; the dropping of a fantastic bomb that had completely wiped out a Japanese city; the confident expectation that Russia would join in the war against Japan, and that it was a matter of weeks before Japan capitulated. It was his duty to return and rally his forces around him. Convinced, Yu-min decided to forgo his proposed trip to Chungking and return immediately.

The Governor was not in a position to offer him an additional escort and he set off again with only his original six personal bodyguards. As he neared the northern half of the railway zone in which the remnants of the Fifteenth were now crowded between the Communists to the north and the Japanese on the railway, he gathered information regarding the location of the scattered units. Learning that Chih-yi's troops were in a rather isolated position at "Peach Blossom" village, he decided that this would offer the best opportunity.

He arrived in the vicinity of "Peach Blossom" village in the afternoon and, hiding in a convenient clump of trees, sent one of his bodyguards who had a relation in Chih-yi's regiment into the village to investigate. By dusk he had returned. There was divided opinion amongst Chih -yi's troops, but Yu-min decided to take a chance and entered the village just before midnight. Within an hour he was on his way, determined to fight through the Communists with the two hundred of Chih-yi's troops that he had gathered, to the pocketed but intact "44th" regiment at Kaomi.

Escaping with three of his bodyguards from Wang Shang-chih's troops, he had been forced to spend the entire day hidden in the wheat crops, and travelling on foot by night. His pony had been shot from under him and two of his body-guards had been killed and one wounded; he himself had narrowly escaped being captured.

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CHAPTER III

RELIEF OF WEIHSIEN CAMP

SEVERAL days passed and there was no further news of the promised ammunition but we continued to display the signal. Late one evening, as we were sitting out in the orchard adjoining our quarters, drinking Japanese beer and discussing, as usual, local politics, we received a pencilled note from the Chief of the Munitions and Supply Department to tell us that he had just heard over the Chungking radio the news that the Japanese were suing for peace.

Everyone took this news very quietly. It was as if it had been a foregone conclusion: an outstanding favourite winning a race — there was no spontaneous demonstration. Perhaps sheer exhaustion after eight years of resistance had dulled their powers of realisation. But to us it meant the end of this decade of Japanese tyranny over Asia; freedom for the thousands of internees; return to our homes and families. To the Chinese it was but a phase; the turning of a page in China's history. For them the struggle would continue, but now against their own flesh and blood, the Communists; internecine war that would destroy the few remaining foundations of national statehood, leaving but a pile of rubble at the feet of the western powers.

Fortunately our camp messenger was with us at the time we received this news and we sent him back immediately with a letter giving the latest radio report. Two or three days passed without confirmation of this announcement. It was in fact denied, but, nevertheless, it was evident that some-thing was in the air.

Wang Shang-chih had been in touch with the Japanese garrison at Tsoshan. They admitted that instructions had been issued to withdraw all Japanese forces from interior garrison points to the railway zone.

We pressed Wang Shang-chih to prepare sufficient troops to proceed to the camp at a moment's notice. He agreed, but nothing was done. The situation was difficult; he had few troops. If the Japanese did surrender, he would have to take over the garrison at Tsoshan and could hardly spare the men. In reply to our enquiry, the camp sent word that all was quiet. They had heard no rumours of substance that would indicate the end of the war, but upon receipt of our message the necessary precautions had been taken and their underground police force had been warned. We discussed the matter with Chih-yi, who was fully aware of the Fifteenth's obligation to go to the assistance of the camp, and he agreed that if Wang Shang-chih failed to take any action, we could depend upon him.

On 14th August the radio officially announced that the Japanese were surrendering. Wang Shang-chih was still hesitant to send troops to Weihsien, and together with Chih-yi we made a last appeal to him. He agreed that preparations should be made, but again there was some delay. Fortunately, however, a letter arrived from the camp at the crucial moment from de Jaegher and Roy Tchou: "McLaren instructs us to inform you that seven U.S. paratroopers dropped outside the camp and succeeded in entering without opposition. They are here purely on a humanitarian mission and have not taken over control of the camp. They are in touch with their Headquarters in Chungking. The situation within the camp is that the Japanese guards will continue to man the walls, reinforced by the internees' own police force, and the authority within the camp has been turned over to the Committee. The Japanese remain responsible for the protection of the camp. The gate is in our hands. Several groups of supposedly Chungking forces have tried to contact us with offers of protection, which have been refused. McLaren says you should come as soon as possible with your unit, which should take up their position around the camp perimeter to protect us. It will be advisable to first send in one or two plain-clothes men to advise us, otherwise there might be bloodshed. We have sufficient food for a few days. No statement will be made to other units pending your arrival."

We translated this letter to Wang Shang-chih and he agreed that Chih-yi and his regiment should accompany us. It was almost midnight before we set out with seven hundred of Chih-yi's picked men. Dawn found us about twenty miles from Weihsien, wending our way over the low hills towards the Weihsien plain. It was a perfect morning, and as the rose and yellow light of dawn spread, I looked back over the hills on our column, more than a mile in length, twisting and turning as the men followed in single file the tortuous foot-path, like the body of a giant writhing snake.

An hour before noon we encamped at the village where the camp messenger lived. He had returned with us and proudly led us to his home, where he prepared tea. For him it was a great day. Now the villagers would know of the important part he played in helping the British and Americans. No longer would he be branded as a running-dog of the Japanese. Leaving the regiment at the village, Chih-yi and the messenger accompanied us the remaining mile to camp.

Nearing the camp, we noticed that during our

absence the Japanese had dug an enormous trench some ten feet deep and about five feet wide, and on the further side from the camp wall high electrified barbed-wire entanglements had been erected. This had apparently been done soon after our escape. Our own get-away had been hazardous enough, but under present conditions it would have been almost impossible. We had to make a long detour around these new defence works — which obviously were put up with a view not only to prevent further escapes but also to ward off any attack on the camp before entering the road leading to the front gate. This road had now been blocked by barbed wire at the entrance to the "Courtyard of the Happy Way". We dismounted and left our horses to the care of the orderly who had accompanied us.

We were met by a member of the internees' police force who came forward with the undoubted intention of refusing entry to this party of Chinese soldiers, and it was not until we were at close quarters that we were recognised. In a few moments de Jaegher and Roy Tchou appeared and we had barely exchanged greetings before we were mobbed by a group of friends. McLaren rescued us from our friends and escorted us to the paratroopers' Headquarters, which was situated in what was formerly the Japanese Camp Commandant's office.

Here we were introduced to the Commanding Officer, Major Staiger, and his fellow paratroopers. He was young — probably about thirty — with an air of efficiency, but was not without also a touch of the melodramatic, which, in the circumstances, was perfectly excusable. Having dropped into a concentration camp bristling with well-armed Japanese guards, and fully expecting opposition, he seemed somewhat amazed to find that he had become king of the castle with such ease. Since his arrival he had been overwhelmed with offers of assistance and professions of loyalty from the puppet leaders throughout the district. He was rather relieved when we appeared, and spent the next few hours in questioning us. Chih-yi seemed to impress him, but he decided that for the time being he would continue under his original declaration, that the camp must be considered a neutral area and that it would not be advisable for our troops actually to participate in guarding it, but he requested Chih-yi to hold his troops in readiness at a distance of a couple of miles in the event of an emergency.

We learned that the first news of the Japanese surrender sent in by us on the 10th of August had been kept a secret by the Committee. A feeler had been put out to the Japanese, who had denied any such possibility, but gradually the rumour spread, although it was not until the morning of 17th August, when an American B–24 zoomed over the camp at a low altitude, that the internees realised that perhaps it was not just another camp rumour. When the plane returned and dropped the paratroopers, there was little doubt left in anyone's mind. There followed a mad rush for the gates.

The paratroopers, dropping into a field of kaoliang ten feet high, disappeared from sight. By the time the internees had made their way to the patch, a few rather startled figures, with pistols drawn, were stealthily making their way out of the thick crop. As each appeared, he was embraced by a mob of hysterical women, rather spoiling the dramatic effect, and was led into the camp. The Japanese, up against a situation for which they were not prepared, made no attempt to resist.

The situation that had arisen in the camp owing to the arrival of the paratroopers was an extraordinary one. The Americans proclaimed that they were there on a purely humanitarian mission and had no military significance whatsoever, and although taking the lead, they still held the Japanese responsible for the safeguarding of the camp. Consequently the Japanese continued to retain their arms, and, to some degree, their arrogance.

It was not long before they demanded that the position of Arthur and myself be clarified — either we must leave the camp with our Chinese guerrilla friends or be classed as internees. Staiger immediately agreed that we should now be considered as internees and as such we were not allowed to leave the camp.

Retaining the Japanese in the camp was by no means a popular move and there was considerable agitation to have them sent to join their garrison at Fangtze. The Japanese remaining complicated the situation and were an added incentive for the Communists to attack the camp. However, with the taking over of the Japanese airfield at Ershihlipu, some five miles from the camp, additional American personnel arrived from West China to augment the paratroopers, and gradually the Japanese guards faded out of the picture.

It was strange to us to be amongst our own people again, to hear our own language spoken. At first there was the inclination to address friends in Chinese or to translate their conversation into Chinese in one's mind. The amenities of the camp, poor as they were, to us appeared the very height of luxury. It was only now that we began to realise how immune we had become to the recognised essential comforts of life a comfortable bed, clean linen, sanitation, a change of clothing, personal possessions things taken for granted and with which we had lost all contact. Time and again we had lost everything but the clothes we wore, until we now had no desire or need for the accumulation of personal effects. This disregard for the personal possessions with which most people clutter their lives was, perhaps, the greatest lesson learned. Even though this phase would pass, it was a wholesome and rather cleansing experience.

We could not help but notice the effects of the past year and a half on some of our friends, particularly in

their clothing, which was naturally, after two and a half years of internment, threadbare and shabby. Many of the internees looked a good deal older and thoroughly tired. The children, although tanned a healthy brown, were for the most part thin and bare-footed.

The chief topics of conversation still revolved around food and the shortcomings of the Committee. Over the course of these years matters of the most trivial importance were magnified out of all proportion; personal affairs had be come not only the concern of one's neighbours but of the whole camp. Confined to this complete world of their own for two and a half years, the majority of these people had become obsessed to an unbelievable degree with the petty affairs of the camp and their personal lives.

We were not apparently the only ones to realise this, for within a week the Americans had inaugurated an intensive course of "reorientation" calculated to bring the mental status of the ex-internees to a state of preparedness for their return to the world of 1945. Loud-speakers were connected up throughout the length and breadth of the camp; there was much preparation and then suddenly one morning at six o'clock the full blast of American high-pressure "reorientation" rent the air in the guise of Frank Sinatra singing "Oh! What a beautiful morning, Oh! What a beautiful day." Doors and windows were flung open and masses of bewildered ex-internees in various stages of nudity looked out on this new post-war world to which they had had such a rude awakening. A stream of derogatory remarks floated up and down the alley-ways. Someone cut a wire — then silence. The doors closed on these staid and unappreciative Britishers, who crawled back to bed. There was much indignation on both sides — a compromise was reached and future "reorientation" was not commenced until 7 A.M., from which hour it continued at a fast and furious pace throughout the day under the able "Director of Reorientation", who had a special office to himself, from which he conducted music, lectures, organised games for adults and children, and kept an eye on the reading-room. In the end the Americans, by sheer perseverance and charm, won the day. The ex-internees were "reorientated" to everyone's satisfaction and learned thoroughly to enjoy the process!

With the collapse of the Japanese, the food situation became serious for a few days. Supplies of bare necessities were sufficient only for two to three days at the time of the Japanese surrender. The Weihsien puppet Commander, quick to see an opportunity of getting " out of the red " politically, needed little persuasion to send food, and Wang Shang-chih, although he could ill afford it, sent a letter by us with a promise of ten thousand pounds of wheat, but in spite of these efforts there was still insufficient to meet requirements. Staiger radioed his Headquarters for assistance and within a couple of days a B–24 flew over the camp to drop sheaves of handbills worded to the effect that supplies were on the way. Within half an hour we heard the ponderous drone of heavily laden planes. Ten B–29s circled overhead and, as their bellies opened, tons of supplies were dropped, filling the sky with yellow, green, red, blue and white parachutes.

Some failed to open and steel drums hurtled through the air and, bursting on contact with the earth, sent up cascades of Californian peaches and cream, tomato soup, corned beef hash, cigarettes, candy and chewing-gum. At least 30 per cent of the first drop was wasted. This continued on and off for several days, until the church, resembling a warehouse, was stacked high with clothes, boots, food, smokes, medical supplies and books — everything that the Stores Officer on Okinawa (from where the planes had come) thought might conceivably be needed.

To cope with the demand for fresh fruit, vegetables and eggs, an open-air market was soon established outside the front gate by the river, where dozens of stalls were set up. People were still short of money, however, and most of the business was carried on by barter. Old clothes that were hardly fit to wear, boots and shoes with gaping

holes, women's hats, were all exchanged for eggs, milk, or maybe a fried chicken or a bottle of the local brandy. Never had there been such eating a craving of two and a half years' standing was satiated there were casualties, but all admitted that it was worth it!

After the first excitement had worn off, and people were nauseated by the sight of food, the ex-internees began to talk of the return to their homes. Many of them failed to appreciate the true situation. The homes of the majority had been occupied by a succession of Japanese. What furniture and household belongings they had left behind on coming to the camp, had long since been sold by the Japanese occupants and replaced by cheap new furniture purchased and re-sold with each incoming tenant. Sanitary, steam heating and plumbing installations had been torn out and sold, or contributed to the Japanese war effort, and the majority of the houses were but empty shells. Before any move of the ex-internees could be considered, accommodation had first to be prepared in Peking, Tientsin and Tsingtao.

RETURN TO CAMP
from left to right ---
-?-, Arthur Hummel, -?-, Laurie Tipton, -?-, Father Raymond deJaegher, Zhang Xihong's father and --- Roy Tchoo.

In the meantime, the political situation was deteriorating rapidly. The vanquished were now defending the victors --- the Japanese, on surrender, had been instructed by the Chinese Government to co-operate with them in the protection of the railways throughout North China from attacks by the Communists. Former puppet forces were now enlisted also to co-operate against the Communists, AN-ho were making increasingly frequent attacks on the railway, cutting communications for days on end and completely isolating the camp.

The American authorities planned to evacuate the camp by railway to Tientsin and Tsingtao, but it was not long before it was realised that the rail trip to Tientsin was quite out of the question. Plans were then made to evacuate the whole camp by rail to Tsingtao, but the Japanese did little to protect the railway and each day brought news of further Communist activities : bridges were blown up and miles of rail were removed. Repairs were carried out, and after days of delay perhaps one train would manage to make the trip from Tsingtao to Weihsien before there were further demolitions.

C-47 Skytrain
C-53 Skytrooper
Dakota

Role	Military transport aircraft
National origin	United States
Manufacturer	Douglas Aircraft Company
Designer	Douglas Aircraft
First flight	23 December 1941[1]
Status	In service in Colombia, Greece, El Salvador and South Africa
Primary users	United States Army Air Forces Royal Air Force United States Navy Royal Canadian Air Force See operators
Number built	10,174
Developed from	Douglas DC-3
Variants	Douglas XCG-17 Douglas AC-47 Spooky

The -weeks were passing, the ex-internees were getting restive and demands were made that steps be taken to find some means of evacuating the camp. The American officials were at a loss for a solution of the problem, and little progress was being made, when they agreed to the suggestion proposed some weeks earlier, that a deputation be sent to the local Communist Headquarters with the request that they should hold up any further demolition of the railway until the camp had been evacuated. Roy-Tchou had connections and he and Arthur set off on a secret mission in an effort to open negotiations which would halt the interruption of communications. The first contact was promising and was followed up by the American Commanding Officer. A truce was agreed upon and repairs were completed; baggage was dispatched on the trial train and was followed the next day by some six hundred of the ex-internees for Tsingtao.

The following night the track was again blown up and a large bridge demolished. More days of delay followed and it was during this period that I was fortunate enough to obtain a seat in a military plane leaving for Peking. As the plane circled over the camp and then headed north, I took my last look at the camp and congratulated myself on the fact that it was I who had managed to get a seat rather than one of the less fortunate eight hundred whom I was leaving behind.

Some two weeks later, almost two months after the Japanese surrender, all hope of getting away the remainder of the ex-internees by train was given up and they were flown out by relays of C-47s to Peking and Tientsin, where they were crowded into hotels and the few remaining houses that were habitable.

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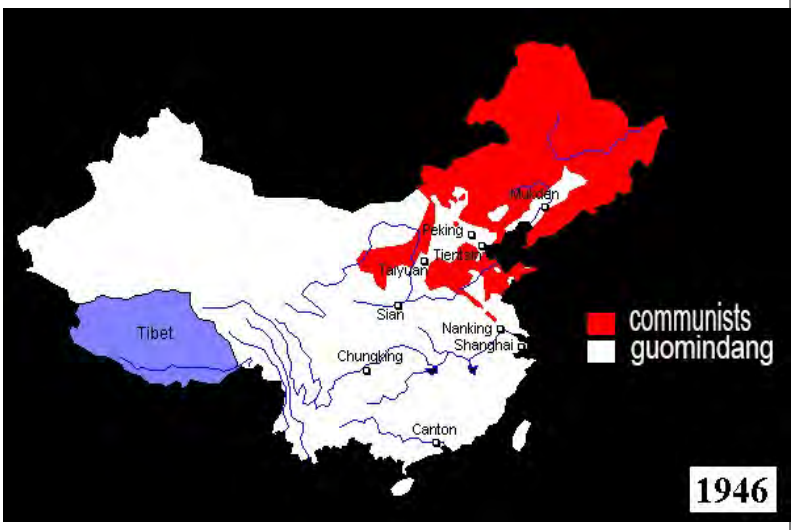
POSTSCRIPT

AND NOW?

THE position throughout North China at the time of the Japanese surrender on 17th August 1945 was similar, in varying degrees, to that of Shantung. The Japanese had control of the railways and some of the more important roads, with garrisons at a few of the larger provincial towns in the interior. Few pro-Chungking guerrillas in North China had survived the latter years of the war, and with these exceptions there remained only the puppet forces that had existed by co-operation with the Japanese, and even these had been greatly reduced in numbers by the inroads of the Communists, who now held the predominant position not only in Shantung but over the whole of North China.



The Japanese surrender was offered to and accepted by the Nationalists as represented by the Chinese Central Government in the war-time capital of Chungking. One of the most important terms of the surrender was the stipulation that the Japanese forces in the field were to retain their armaments and maintain their current military positions until such time as the Central Government troops were in a position to accept their surrender. They were instructed to co-operate with the puppet troops and the few remaining guerrillas in protecting lines of communication from the Communists.

The Communists refused to recognise the surrender of the Japanese to the Chinese Central Government, and demanded a separate treaty of surrender, declaring that until this was concluded they would consider the Communist party as still being at war with Japan. No separate surrender terms were made, and the Communists then pressed for the right to accept the Japanese surrender and disarmament in the areas under their control.

Continuing their policy of expansion, the Communists concentrated on the puppet forces which formed the outer perimeter of all Japanese garrison points, and the guard at some of the smaller railway stations. They soon succeeded in reducing these forces to such an extent that they had virtual control over the whole of North China, with the exception of the larger towns on the railways. The Japanese, for their part, did little but protect their own lives by barricading themselves into their strongly fortified garrisons both day and night, and defending themselves against Communist attacks. This left the intermediate sections of the railways unprotected, and, within a month of the Japanese surrender, the Communists had played such havoc with communications that there was not one stretch of railway operating in North China over a distance of more than twenty to thirty miles. Having successfully crippled all rail transportation through-out North China and thus prevented the movement by rail of the Nationalist troops into North China, the Communists succeeded in gaining even further time to consolidate their position in the North.

Meanwhile, the Russians had swept through Manchuria from the Siberian border to the old Russian treaty port of Port Arthur, accepting the surrender of the famed Japanese Kwan Tung army together with their armament and equipment practically intact. With the Russian occupation of Manchuria, the Chinese Communists in North China experienced no little encouragement, and it was not long before material support was added to moral uplift.

The Nationalists, with large troop concentrations south of the Yellow River and with no possibility of rail transportation to the North, were in an extremely vulnerable position. They had insufficient air transport to be effective, and the only alternative was to march on foot, fighting their way north against Communist opposition — this certain divisions did, but it was a slow process when time was such an important factor. Finally it was agreed that American planes should fly Chinese occupational forces into the more important of the North China cities, and at the same time large American forces were landed by boat in Tsingtao and Tientsin, where they proceeded, with the Chinese, to accept the instrument of Japanese surrender and to organise the repatriation of Japanese soldiers and civilians.

The comparatively small numbers of Chinese troops that were flown into North China had little effect, other than that of morale, in the protection of these towns from the possibility of Communist attacks, and only the American forces prevented their occupation by the Communists — not by active resistance but by their mere presence.

After the acceptance of the surrender of the various Japanese military zones in North China at Peking, Tientsin, Tsingtao and Tsinan, the Japanese troops on the

spot were confined to barracks pending repatriation, but there were still large isolated groups of Japanese in the interior, surrounded by Communists and unable or unwilling to proceed to their Headquarters. A few groups, rather than surrender, joined the Communists, and it was well into 1946 before the remainder were satisfactorily accounted for.

The Chinese, as a whole, acted with remarkable restraint towards the Japanese soldiers and civilians, there being few cases of violence. Gradually the Japanese civilians were concentrated in specified areas pending return to their own country. The efficiency with which this repatriation was carried out under difficult circumstances was a most creditable performance on the part of the American armed forces. A year after the termination of war in the Pacific, almost the entire Japanese population of China, together with the Japanese troops, had been transported back to Japan.

The Japanese surrender left Wang Shang-chih occupying Tsoshan and in command of the Japanese garrison there, with Yu-min in a similar position at Kaomi, some twenty-five miles further to the east, where he had firmly re-established himself in a small area over which his 44th regiment still maintained control. Conditions were more favourable in this area under Yu-min, and as the Communists pressed in on Tsoshan, so Wang Shang-chih's followers deserted him and rejoined Yu-min. Within two or three months Wang Shang-chih retired from his post as Garrison Commander at Tsoshan to the provincial capital, Tsinan — leaving his few troops that remained in charge of his Regimental Commander. Early in 1946, the Communists defeated the remnants and occupied Tsoshan.

In the spring of '46 I met Yu-min in Tsingtao and returned with him to Kaomi for a few days. The situation was serious, the Communists had closed in on the 44th, and they were now confined to an area within a few miles of the city. Nationalist troops were stationed together with Yu-min's, but they had little experience of guerrilla warfare and were consequently not accustomed to the hit-and-run tactics and night attacks of the Communists, as were Yu-min's troops. There was jealousy and lack of co-operation.

Yu-min was still the active force behind this remnant of the Fifteenth, but there was little of the old fire and enthusiasm amongst the troops whom we had so much admired during the days when it was a matter of outwitting the Japanese. Many of his former followers tired and disillusioned after eight years of war, were not prepared to continue the struggle against their own people, and had retired to the comforts of Tsingtao and Tsinan. Yu-min himself was far from optimistic, and did not expect to be able to hold on to his position indefinitely unless reinforcements were sent from Tsingtao.

I was not surprised, a few days after my return to Tsingtao, to receive a telephone call from Yu-min's representative in that city to tell me that word had just come to hand of the Communists' attack on Kaomi. For two days there was no news. It was feared that Yu-min had been either captured or killed. On the third day a few stragglers arrived at Tsingtao and told of the occupation of Kaomi by the Communists; Yu-min was wounded, but there was no further news. Late that evening the telephone rang — Yu-min, though wounded, had succeeded in reaching Weihsien in safety. The following day he flew to Tsinan to interview the Provincial Governor, and to have his wounded leg attended to.

The Fifteenth were now completely shattered. The survivors dispersed to Weihsien and Tsingtao — this surely was the end of a most earnest and patriotic unit and its leader. But within ten days Yu-min had flown back to Tsingtao: indefatigable in spirit, he engaged in plans with the Nationalists for an organised drive against the Communists to reopen the railway. Yu-min is only one of many whose deep-rooted hatred of the Communists, derived from years of conflict and personal experiences, makes a peaceful solution to this problem hardly possible.

By the late spring of '46, the Communists had almost complete control of the railway with the exception of Tsingtao, Tsinan and Weihsien, and attacks were constantly made against these three cities, but at no time did they succeed in anything more serious than skirmishes in the outlying suburbs. However, the economic situation in these cities, as in many others in North China, suffered from the Communist blockade and the resultant difficulty in the provision of adequate food. Large sections of the railway were completely destroyed; stations were burned to the ground, rails were removed altogether for miles on end, bridges had been blown up and the rail embankment severed by enormous trenches dug right through the width of the rail-bed.

Nationalist troops in large numbers were now beginning to arrive in North China and Manchuria by boat from the south. Their advance into the interior was not always opposed by the Communists, who avoided open conflict but harried their communication lines and spread subtle and effective anti-Nationalist propaganda. The Nationalists sought open battle, where the superiority of their armaments, for the most part the latest American equipment, gave them the upper hand. As the Communists withdrew, so they destroyed anything of value.

A trail of Communist despoliation lies over the whole of North China from Suiyuan to Shantung, marking their desperate efforts to expand the military power of their party, knowing full well that this is still the deciding factor in Chinese politics. Destruction of communications, flooding of mines and the wreckage of machinery, violent and bloody skirmishes all over North

China, were bringing to a head this struggle of almost twenty years' duration against the dynastic dictatorship of the one-party Kuomintang rule.

The United States, which took over the responsibility of the war in the China theatre, was soon deeply involved in her internal politics. The avowed aim of American policy is the establishment of a democratic state of government. With this end in view she has intervened on the side of the officially recognised Nationalist Government a government that won and maintained its power by military force. Prosecution of the war effort necessitated negotiations with the Communists, and contact with this party brought doubts as to the soundness of the American view — since when, although American policy has remained pre-eminently pro-Chungking, it has varied from time to time in the strength and directness of its measure of support to the Nationalists.

The post-war political crisis in China has proved a hard testing ground for American foreign policy, which has shown, if not polished diplomacy, at least realistic understanding of the facts. But her tacit recognition of the Communist party's claims, by the advocacy of a coalition government, has not enhanced her standing with the Nationalists, who are inclined to resent the forcing of their legally constituted government to negotiate with those whom they regard as armed rebels.

In the final analysis, America, and for that matter Great Britain also, is concerned primarily with the establishment in China of a government in accord with the so-called democratic bloc, as opposed to a government under the auspices of Russia.

The American "occupation" of China, and consequent intervention in her internal political affairs, must in time almost inevitably react to the disadvantage of the intervener already there are signs of "ingratitude".

Great Britain, deeply occupied in her own affairs, re-occupied Hong Kong, and with that ceased to take any further active interest in the Chinese problem. There are no British troops in China to cause friction, and business is marking time; many of the old Consular staff have returned to resume their happy state of pre-war hibernation. On the surface this may appear very dull and un-enterprising, but there will be a swing of the pendulum, and it is not improbable that when that occurs Britain will reap the benefit of her present policy of apparent detachment.

THE END

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