

I - 3. Article "The Japanese in China" - The Manchester
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THE JAPANESE IN CHINA

By Agnes Smedley

What is the nature of Japanese occupation of China? Many people in the industrial centres occupied by the Japanese have answered that question for those regions. Of the interior less is known because the Japanese Army, intent on driving all business interests except the Japanese from China, have refused foreigners the right to resume their occupations along the Yangtze and elsewhere.

At present I am in the interior, in a region referred to by many Chinese as "lost territory," but by this New Fourth Army as "the front". They have turned this Japanese rear into a Chinese front. This region runs in a broad belt 50 to 150 and more miles wide, and in length it extends from Wusih, two and a half hours by rail from Shanghai, to Tatung, a town lying between Wuhu and Kiukiang on the River Yangtze.

When Nanking fell Chinese troops fought over this region for some time, then evacuated. The Japanese advanced and burned all buildings within a distance of two to three miles of the railway unless these could serve them as military and economic bases. Before me lies the diary of one, Takamasu Enyu, a Japanese soldier, who was in this area from December 13 to February 18. His home was in Hiroshima, at 214 Fumairi Street, Japan. He was killed by New Fourth Army guerrillas in November, on the north bank of the Yangtze. Here are some extracts from his diary that show what he and his countrymen were doing while they were in Tanyang, a town on the railway south of Chinkiang:-

December 22, 1937.---Market prices must also be dictated by us. If merchants refuse we threaten and they are forced to listen.

December 21.---...Because it is New Year I went to market to confiscate beef and bean cakes.

January 6.---...Out to confiscate things. Got straw from a Chinese Mandarin's house. It was a miserable scene.

January 8.---...Pulled in Chinese passers-by from the street for labour. At the end gave them two or three cigarettes each. I confiscated the cigarettes from Chinese passers-by in the street.

January 17.---...Order Chinese to bring us fuel for heating. Confiscated some wine and got drunk... Went down town and bought two boxes of bean cakes. Paid 50 cents instead of 60. The shopkeeper led me to a place where I confiscated wine

February 11.---...Ordered to loot and kill all the Chinese near the factory. Gobbled after supper.

February 18.---...Confiscating section came back with captured ducks. A part did not return by dark. At eight they came in in a disorderly way. Defeated remnants attacked and fought them.

Contrary to popular belief, not all people fled from Japanese occupation. Millions of people were too poor to become homeless wanderers unless they were actually bombed out. In the Nanking area there were many such. Nor did they know the difference between one ruler and another. For a decade the Chinese Government fearing "Red" influence, had forbidden all political educational work among the people, but instead had established the ancient feudal "pao chia" system. The "pao chia" leaders were rich landlords, merchants, magistrates, and when the Japanese swept over this region some of these men did not flee but remained to welcome the invaders. They ran up to the Japanese flag and induced the common people to submit to Japanese rule. Trained in feudal obedience, the people obeyed. From these gentlemen the Japanese organised the Wei Chih Hwei, or local puppet maintenance committee which had a variety of tasks imposed on them, providing living quarters, food, money

The Manchester Guardian Weekly
Friday, March 17, 1939

The Japanese In China (cont'd)

and women, and clearing the market for commercial wares of the conquerors. The members of these committees got some of the crumbs of loot after the Japanese had finished. Some became wealthy even on the crumbs.

Another organisation which the Japanese have organised in this region is the "Shuen Fu Pan" (literally meaning "Announce-Comfort Group"). Its head is a Japanese and it is built upon the same lines as the secret gangster organisations of Shanghai, many of whose members are active in it. The Japanese have used this same kind of organisation in Manchuria and North China. All the scum of a decaying social system naturally gravitates toward such an organisation--opium and drug sellers, professional thugs, murderers, petty thieves, and the ordinary kind of gangster found throughout the world. They are men without even the rudiments of culture, of social or national consciousness. The Japanese also draw into this organisation many destitute ignorant men who have families to support. The headquarters are in Nanking, with branches in various other centres. It has open and secret branches of work. Its secret members dress as the common people and wander over the country gathering news about guerrillas and other anti-Japanese elements. Some were sent to join the New Fourth Army as volunteers, but were detected, examined, and shot. Their monthly wages had been \$12 (Chinese), but the Japanese paid them in addition \$5 for every piece of true news they brought in. If there was no news, the gangster created it, and some miserable wretch paid with his life for it.

Other agents of the Japanese move over the countryside dressed as Buddhist monks or nuns, but their task is military. They have signs or passwords and report to Chinese traitors in various regions.

The open sections of the Shuen Fu Pan have a variety of tasks. They operate with a rifle in one hand and a pair of handcuffs in their pockets, and the people suffer much from them. They examine all men and issue "good men badges" for five cents each. Woe betide the man who does not buy one. They go in advance of the Japanese, and, with the maintenance committees, prepare welcomes for advancing Japanese troops. They sell little Japanese flags to the people who must buy or be branded as an "anti-Japanese element", and help to prepare banquets and "comfort houses" for the invader. These "comfort houses" are filled with captive girls and young married women taken from the common people. They are called "Hwang Chun Wei Lao So", or "Comfort Houses for the Imperial Army". Many of the Shuen Fu Pan bring up the tail of a Japanese column. They are clad in Japanese uniforms and aid in looting and killing. In all places they make money in a thousand ways; they step into a man's house and say, "I know you have been hiding guerrillas here--for so much I will not report you". The victim pays. Like the Japanese, they can go into a shop and take anything they want. They carry Japanese objects, such as pens, watches, knives; halt men in the street and tell them to buy. The men buy.

No merchant great or small can refuse to accept and sell Japanese goods in this region. From 60 to 70 per cent of all goods on the market are Japanese--cotton piece goods coming first, then followed by matches, paper, cigarettes, porcelain, glassware, incense, kerosene, all kinds of hardware, and such goods as pens, watches, flashlights, combs, and so on. These goods come up the Yangtze in steamers, are delivered to Japanese merchants in big cities, who distribute them to Chinese merchants, who then distribute them over the countryside by river boats or rafts, carts, donkeys, or human carriers. No other foreign goods except Japanese are found in the region. Some Chinese goods are still found, however, perhaps 30 or 40 percent.

In August, two months after the New Fourth began guerrilla warfare in this region, the Japanese decided to try "political methods" to isolate the New Fourth from the people, who, by that time, were firmly linked with it. Their methods were these: they issued proclamations put up by the Shuen Fu Pan, informing the people that the Japanese fight no one but "Reds". One slogan read: "We do not fight ordinary bandits--we fight only Communists". These "political methods" were tried for

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The Japanese in China (cont'd)

a month. When they brought no results Japanese columns again bore down on villages, burning them to the earth. But the people had been taught to evacuate and take everything with them. A few were discouraged, but the majority remained true to the New Fourth Army.