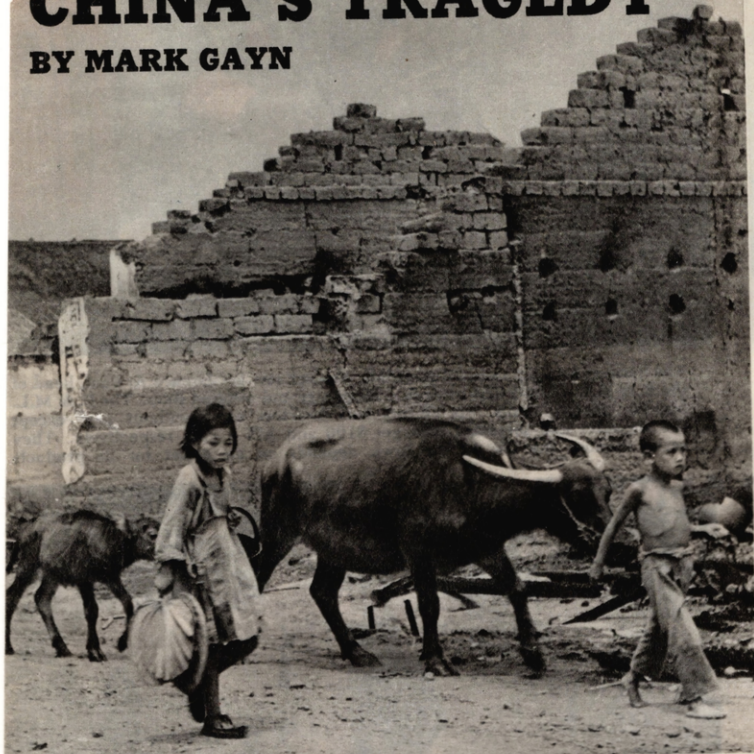


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The Cause of China's Tragedy, by Mark Gayn.

Collier's
Jan. 13/1945
The Cause of CHINA'S TRAGEDY
 BY MARK GAYN



In some sections of China, food is so scarce that women and children are sold into slavery at so much per pound. Girls bring half as much as pork



In happier days, before his recall at the request of Chiang Kai-shek, Gen. Joseph Stilwell pinned the Legion of Merit on the Chinese leader

The morale of China's people and their regard for the government of Chiang Kai-shek are at their lowest ebb. The nation is cut in two, and the Japanese threaten its very heart. This report tells what caused this disaster and why only democratic reform can save the country

Facing them was an army of 250,000 under General Tang En-po, who had a fighter's reputation but kept his headquarters far, far behind the front.

When the blow fell, the Honan Command had 700 trucks. Five hundred of them were immediately seized by Chinese officers and officials to move their families, concubines and chattels to safety. Left without transport, the Chinese army promptly took over all carts and oxen it could find.

Oxcarts are the pillar of peasant economy. Angriily, the farmers began to resist. Leadership came from the old village secret society, the Red Spears, which for decades has defended the safety of the villages. As the peasant bands grew, they began to attack Chinese army units up to 500 men. The farmers were not for Japan but their slogan was "Better Japan's soldiers than the men of Tang En-po." In all, they probably seized 50,000 rifles.

Meanwhile, the small Japanese units streaked across the young wheat, cutting rail lines, taking towns, disorganizing Chinese defenses. In a few weeks, nothing remained of Tang's army. It had crumbled into nothing, leaving behind an evil memory and the bodies of hapless, ragged soldiers strewn along the country roads.

Honan was Japan's. So was the crop, one of the best in Honan's history.

Poised for the Final Thrust

Now the Japanese rested briefly. Before them, to the south, lay the heart of Free China, with its rich rice fields, teeming cities, American air bases, ragged soldiery, bickering generals, its abject poverty of tenant farmers side by side with the vast and insolent wealth of speculators. A blow here made good military sense. It could establish a land link with Japan's looted empire in south Asia; it could diminish the American successes on the seas and in Burma; conceivably it could knock disunited and exhausted China out of the war.

General Yasuji Okamura was picked to deal the blow. He was more than an able soldier; he was also a member of that brilliant Japanese army clique which made intrigue and subterfuge the elder brothers of the cannon. The pattern of the campaign in Honan was duplicated on a larger scale.

Swarms of well-trained, Chinese fifth columnists filtered into the area. They were armed with tommy guns and hand grenades; they knew the terrain and its people. Behind them came guerrilla-type Japanese units.

Okamura played his hand well. His agents murdered and sabotaged; they spread fearful rumor; skillfully, they played on the tragic disunity of Free China. They tore up the close web of outposts which warned the American air bases of the approaching enemy raiders. The bulk of the Japanese army was still far away, but with the web destroyed, the key American airfield at Hengyang had to be abandoned.

Changsha, Free China's rice bin, was Okamura's first objective. Four times previously

THE zero hour in Free China, the hour of crucial and irrevocable decision, came in December. After years of bloody effort, Japan had hacked a corridor across Asia, split China in two, placed her armies in a position to strike either at China's nerve center in Chungking or the key supply base at Kunming.

In the eighth year of her war, China was forced to the verge of complete military collapse and today she is weakened by disunity, hunger and corruption, by her own warring political cliques and by a strangling blockade. Her armies are battered, underarmed and ill-trained; her reserves are pitifully slim. Only the most drastic measures by China and her allies can prevent a disaster. But these measures must come at once, for China has no more time to spare—and no more space to trade for precious time.

The story of how China steadily drifted to chaos and defeat can be told in many ways. It can begin in 1926, when a young, earnest Chinese general named Chiang Kai-shek, flanked by his Russian advisers, launched his historic drive to sweep China of warlordism. Or it can begin a year later, when Chiang broke with his Red allies, and a wave of terror swept China. Or it can begin in those unbearably hot, tense summer days of 1937 when Japan struck her final blow at China.

Or it can well begin—as this report will—with last April, when a swarm of Japanese "guerrilla" bands, followed by 200 whippet tanks, attacked in the green plain of Honan Province. That April, the Japanese played a canny game. For months their agents, disguised as merchants, had crossed the front lines freely. They scouted the Chinese defenses, talked to the officers and men, carefully felt the people's pulse. They found that the Chinese army in Honan was rotten with graft and inaction, that it lacked equipment, that it was hated by the farmers from whom it had extorted grain in the two preceding years of famine.

When the dossier on Honan was complete, the Japanese struck. At first they used only 40,000 men, split into small, mobile units.

Chinese army medics minister to a wounded soldier. Unfortunately this treatment is not always possible

the Japanese had reached for it, but each time they gave it up. Now the city was defended by two feuding Chinese generals. While the enemy neared, they quarreled. The area commander, a competent general named "Tiger" Hsueh Yueh, could not be reached because of disrupted communications.

Then the Tiger and the High Command in Chungking began to argue over strategy. Orders were issued and countermanded, and made again—until Changsha fell, and then Hengyang. Kweilin itself, with its all-important American air base, lay naked, waiting for the rape.

From Kweilin, the Japanese sent a column west, to menace China's most important cities and life lines. The shabby, tragic campaign was drawing to a close.

But Okamura did more than take territory. With his scalpel he ripped sores, pricked long-standing myths, widened the cracks of disunity he found on China's prostrate body. What followed Okamura's thrust—and notably the recall of General Joseph Stilwell and resignation of Ambassador Clarence Gauss—were not phases of China's sickness, they were its symptoms.

A little was told of this sickness in the first splurge of free speech following the recall of General Joseph Stilwell. But much as yet remains untold, and much that has been distorted awaits correction.

The Truth Must Be Told

This report is based partly on personal knowledge, partly on the accounts of a host of American observers. It is not intended to be, nor can it be, a general indictment of Chiang Kai-shek, his government, his party, or the Chinese people. Such an indictment would be both untrue and unfair. This is a reporter's report on China, a picture of a friend in great distress.

The picture is not pretty. But for China's sake, as for our own, the truth must now be told. The hour is too late for falsehood, for false optimism, for bickering and self-righteous indignation.

First, a few conclusions on which all observers are united:

- (1) The influence of Chiang Kai-shek and his government is at its lowest in ten years.
- (2) National morale is at its lowest point.
- (3) Disunity, physical exhaustion and the inability of her allies to send in sufficient supplies are all responsible for China's tragic defeats. For this disunity the only effective cure is democratic reform—rather than the addition of one or two Communists to the cabinet.

All American observers agree that Chungking's voice becomes less authoritative with each outbound mile. Even before last summer, the outlying provinces frequently defied the central government. Since Okamura split Free China in two, this dissidence has increased.

It can now be revealed that the dissident leaders are united in what is loosely known as the Southeast Council. Today the council is less a formal body than a tendency and a lot of secret meetings. But little separates it from the final step—that of renting a headquarters, hiring a staff and acquiring a fancy seal.

Among the dissidents are several southern generals and governors. Some of these are well-meaning men, some utter scoundrels; many are motivated by personal ambition. But all without exception find support in the general dissatisfaction with Chungking's undemocratic trends.

One reform-minded governor recently asked an American official for a detailed report on the workings of county government in the United States. If some day an American political scientist discovers the county pattern of the sovereign state of Tennessee duplicated in a certain Chinese province, he can trace the phenomenon to the Chinese separatism of 1944-45.

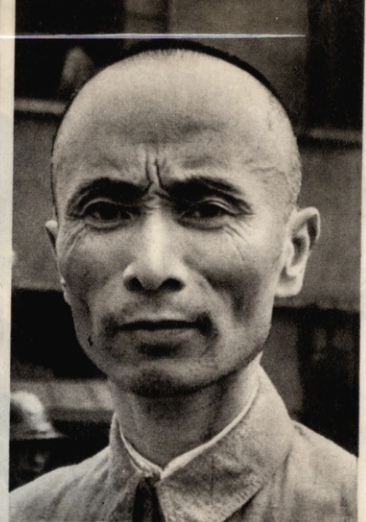
In some vital areas of south China, the dissidents allow no Chungking troops. In



Dr. Sun Fo, son of Sun Yat-sen, is a leading democrat



Chen Li-fu, with his brother, controls the party machinery



Chen Kuo-fu, other brother, is Chiang's close friend

others, Chungking's officials are tolerated but ignored. These areas are filled with swarms of Chungking's secret service men, and money is spent freely. But the best Chungking has been able to achieve thus far has been an uneasy armistice.

Hand in hand with separatism marches a decay of spirit. One of the graver charges against Chungking is that it has failed to give popular morale the boost it needed so desperately. China's countless Wangs, Wus and Liangs have been asked to make colossal contributions to the war effort and the government's upkeep—in blood, in compulsory labor, in backbreaking taxes, in forced sale of grain at low prices. Yet none in Chungking has bothered to explain—as the Communists have done—why such sacrifices were needed. As a result, the blood, sweat and cash given by China's weary millions appear to them to be unfair imposts, forcibly col-

lected by a remote and cruel government.

Little surprise, therefore, that Yunnan Province, with its great American base at Kunming, was described by a competent American observer as "defeatist." In neighboring Kwangsi, where the U.S. Air Force lost so many vital bases last year, seventy per cent of the people are said by another American to be either indifferent to the war or ignorant of the issues. ("Who are Americans?" said the widow of a Chinese officer. "Aren't they the light-skinned Japanese?")

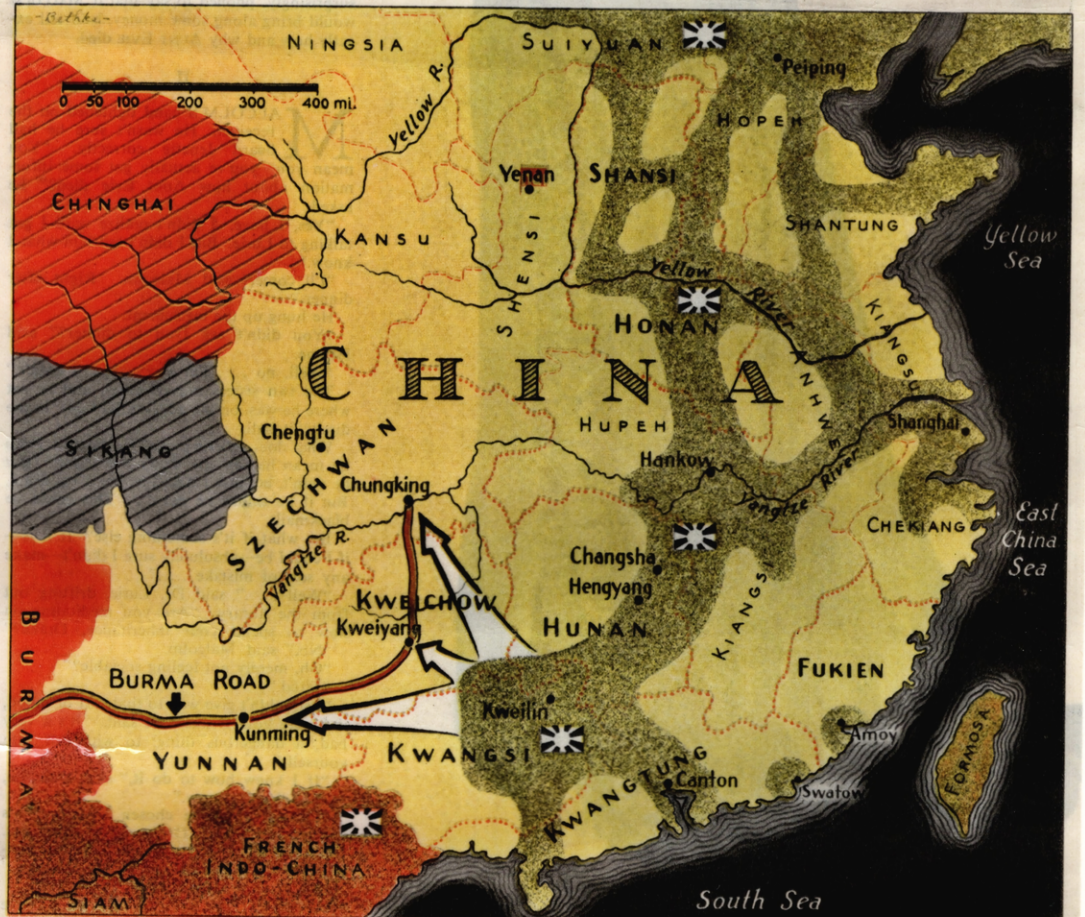
Food is the Ruling Interest

American sampling of public opinion in South China showed the people were most concerned with the threat of famine, secondarily with increased democratic reforms, and—a poor third—the war. All this with the enemy on the doorstep.

Sometimes dissatisfaction boils over. In Fukien Province, villages rose bloodily against conscription gangs. In Shansi and Honan, farmers battled the rapacious Chinese soldiery. In Yunnan, "younger generals" plotted to kidnap Chiang Kai-shek on his way home from Cairo. In Kansu, behind an air-tight censorship, a miniature civil war is in progress; Chinese troops are ambushed by the peasants, roads are dug up, government warehouses are attacked and looted, tax collectors are defied. In Kweichow Province, now under Japanese attack, similar uprisings have broken out under the leadership of an old secret society.

Most of this unrest involves farmers, as it must in a country in which rural distress is so deep and widespread. Thus far, the unrest has been held in relative check by fear of punishment and lack of organization. But

(Continued on page 66)



Black blot of Jap conquest bisects China, forms a springboard for possible drives on Kunming, Chungking or Kweiyang

The Cause of China's Tragedy

Continued from page 19

one day, misery will shatter the dam of fear. If at that time it acquires a tough, competent, farseeing leadership, armed with catchy slogans, it will form one of the most destructive social tidal waves in China's history.

From rural distress, turn to the field of foreign affairs. American observers charge in unison that the Chinese government has gradually estranged its three great allies. Some of Chungking's actions and statements stem from a healthy nationalism. But most can probably be traced to the strong antiforeign feeling shrouding official Chungking.

Typical of this spirit were the secret regulations issued last year by the National Military Council in Chungking. Intended to

govern the contacts of Chinese with foreigners, the regulations said: "People in charge of guiding foreign visitors must prevent them, as much as possible, from meeting and talking with foreigners already residing at those points."

With a fine sense of what constituted news, a Chengtu daily printed the item, after clearing it with an unwary censor. General Chang Chun, governor of Szechwan and Chiang Kai-shek's intimate, at once angrily ordered a court-martial. The censor received five years' imprisonment. The guilty editor and reporter were ordered fired and blacklisted, so that they could work on no other newspaper in China.

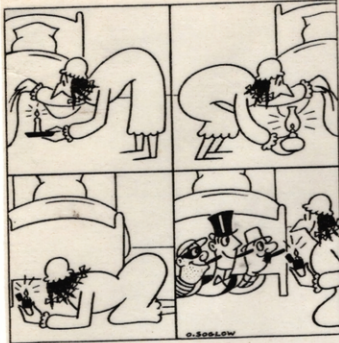
Persistently, Britain has been accused by the Chinese of not fighting the war, of hindering China's war-making, of holding that which should be China's—including portions of Burma. Even more open and vigorous have been the attacks on Russia. It took the combined influence of Henry Wallace and Donald Nelson to convince Chungking that

the United States will neither fight Russia nor back the Kuomintang in a civil war on the Chinese Reds.

American pressure has curbed the anti-Russian campaign. It has also led to the removal of the trouble-making, anti-Soviet governor of Chinese Turkestan. But it has not prevented the government-controlled press from perceptibly, if shrewdly, playing down news of Russian victories.

But even the United States, China's warmest and most disinterested friend, has not escaped without bruises. These have been caused by selfish haggling in Chungking, by official corruption, by endless obstructions. The withdrawal of General Stilwell and Ambassador Clarence Gauss was, in a way, a measure of the deep and bitter frustration felt by the Americans working in and for China. No Americans have tasted more of bitterness than the officers and men desperately trying to whip the Chinese military effort into shape.

One of China's major contributions to the



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Allied war effort has been to allow the Americans to build and use air bases. But Chungking took no steps to protect the Americans from vicious and wholesale profiteering. This is a typical instance:

A Chinese concern which undertook to build an air base in south China sublet the contract. The subcontractor in turn sublet it. By the time the contract had filtered down to the fourth subcontractor, the margin of legitimate profit had been almost eliminated. The subcontractor solved the problem simply by cutting the pay of the thousands of men, women and children corralled to build the base, explaining to them the Americans did not want to pay more. Naturally, American prestige in this area sank to an all-time low.

As it earlier failed to make effective use of Russian equipment, the Chinese command now misused such American equipment as they received. This was partly the fault of the poor training of the soldiers and partly the ineptness of generals. But also heavily involved in it was Chungking's anxiety to arm itself for the expected domestic disputes.

Equipment flown into China at such fantastic cost has often been hoarded by the Chinese far behind the front. Authenticated instances, now in the possession of the editors of Collier's, cannot be published only because they would give valuable information to the enemy.

Competent Americans further report instances of China's refusal to permit U.S. forces to use American matériel, consigned to China but deteriorating in India for lack of transportation.

In China's own war effort, the picture has been even darker. In the eighth year of the war, China still has no service of supply, no truly unified command, no modern system of training reserves, no adequate medical corps. An utterly corrupt conscription system fills the army with the least fit, for the ablest and the strongest can either buy their way out or desert. Throughout China, exemption has a market quotation, ranging from \$4,000 to \$50,000, Chinese—perhaps \$7 to \$80 in American money. Once the recruits are in the army, they are starved and maltreated to a degree unimaginable anywhere else in the world. One observer in China estimates that only one recruit in twenty reaches the front.

In the wave of reform which followed General Stilwell's recall, the Chinese set up a Ministry of Conscription and promised other changes, long urged by "Vinegar Joe." The most important of these was the reduction of the armies to a size which could be commanded, trained, equipped and fed adequately.

These reforms would do much good, but the Americans in China are not too sanguine. The universal draft requires a degree of central control and efficiency which Chungking does not possess. Too, armies in China are political instruments, and the semi-independent war lords will fiercely oppose any attempt to reduce their forces.

An Impenetrable Economic Web

But it is in the field of economics that things are blackest. Even before the soldiers go into battle, their striking power is sapped by inflation, by hoarding and unbridled speculation, by an antiquated and rapacious tax system, by crippled transportation and unashamed trading with the enemy. Most of these problems are interlocked. They must not be tackled halfheartedly or piecemeal. Yet one of the chief criticisms against Chungking is that it has done precisely that.

Take inflation: Last month the prices were 450 times those of 1936. The exchange value of one American dollar had gone up from \$3.50 to \$600, and may yet climb to \$800. Knowing that the Chinese dollar is barely worth the American paper on which it is printed, the speculators refuse to hold on to it. Industrial investment is not sufficiently attractive. Therefore, the speculators turn to greener pastures.

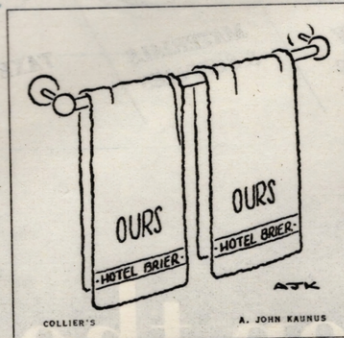
In huge chunks, land is falling into the hands of city speculators. In China this development is political dynamite, compared to which our own "Okie" problem is a penny firecracker. Speculators who do not buy land

hoard raw materials. Meanwhile, the industries languish for lack of capital. (Chiang Kai-shek, it is said, looked startled when Donald Nelson told him China's industrial plant was running at only 30 per cent to 70 per cent of its meager capacity.)

Chungking's ventures into wartime controls have thus far been ill-advised and poorly executed. Typical, perhaps, has been Chungking's attempt to control the price of salt in Fukien. So high was the price set in this rich salt-producing area that the man in the street could not afford it. Now salt is bootlegged on such a scale that special troops have to be posted to compel the salt makers to turn their product over to the government at the prescribed prices—and to keep a nightly vigil for thieves.

Case of Haves and Have-Nots

Rationing, when it had been tried, proved inefficient. That has also been true of the mobilization of resources—though Mr. Nelson may now have better luck with it. Almost nothing has been done to control the manufacture of and trade in luxury goods. No effective effort has been made to reduce the budgetary deficit or to boost revenues by taxing excess profits. China's poor are starving; China's rich are obscenely rich. (Typical



is the case of a speculator who ordered a piano smuggled from Canton, across two battle lines—and got it.)

China's tax machinery has bogged down in corruption and inefficiency. An American expert estimates that possibly only a third of the revenues collected reaches the government. Yet the number and variety of taxes defy imagination. Taxes have been imposed on funerals, on weddings and on family-raising, on prostitution, gambling and monasteries, on religious feasts and pig slaughter, on the remarriage of widows and the sale of dried mushrooms.

In a town in southeast China an American, hungry for beef, discovered there was none on the market because of a prohibitive tax imposed on freshly quartered meat by the local branch of the Kuomintang. The official explanation for the tax: "To prevent tainted beef from reaching the customer."

In a Fukien hamlet, another American met a soldier loudly proclaiming a "new government tax on freshly cut lumber." In sight of the American, the soldier collected the "tax" on two loads of timber from protesting owners. The American is still uncertain whether the "tax" went to the ingenious soldier himself, or to his officer.

Not all the blame rests on Chungking's shoulders. The most vicious imposts are decreed by the local war lords and officials, but Chungking's taxes, too, are high and tragically inequitable. Together with prohibitive taxes marches usury. A Chungking bank solicits idle funds, repaying the investors 30 per cent a month. In southeast China, peanut-oil traders, needing cash at peanut harvest time, pay \$1.60 for a dollar borrowed two months previously. A dollar trebling itself within a year excites no comment.

But the most malodorous scandal of wartime China concerns her trading with the enemy. This trade, computed in billions of Chinese dollars, flows freely across the front lines. It benefits the Japanese, causes famine in key areas, saps Free China's industrial strength, demoralizes her armies. It is open knowledge that many Chinese semiofficial

organs, a flock of Chungking dignitaries and numerous generals are involved in the traffic.

Chungking informally divides the trade with the enemy into "legitimate" and "illegitimate." The former includes the imports of essential items: Nippon-made cloth, thread, medicines. Some of these imports are handled by huge semiofficial trading and shipping firms, and by smaller merchants asked to do so by the government.

"Legitimate" imports go through Chinese customs stations and pay duty to China. Frequently, the "legitimate" importers are organized in smugglers' guilds and they do not hesitate to bring their grievances to official attention.

Most of the imports, however, filter through the Chinese lines. This, of necessity, required the connivance of the military, from the lowly *lao ping*—China's G.I. Joe—to his general. Each collects his cut, each in the process violates army regulations.

The poison of mercantilism spreads wide and deep. It creates groups interested in "normalcy" at the front. A high Allied officer told me of a talk he had with the governor of a province in which he intended to set up a base.

The governor protested sharply: "No, I cannot allow you to do it. Now everything is peaceful, the people are working, and what we lack we can buy from the Japanese dwarfs. If you set up your base here, the first thing you know, the Japanese airplanes will come and bomb us to bits."

A good case, certainly, could be built for the "legitimate" smuggling—if it could be funneled through a few rigidly controlled points; if it included only the items which Free China really needs; if nothing important were given to the enemy in return. But unfortunately an alarming ratio of the smuggled goods includes luxury items: lipsticks and cigarettes, talcum powder and table delicacies, gadgets for the home and exquisite silks.

In return, China pays Japan with things she cannot afford to give up: rice, tin and wolfram, cotton and tung oil, timber, paper, and alum, tobacco and wheat, quicksilver and copper. (A single port in Indo-China handles 100 tons of Chinese copper a month. Raw cotton exported to Japanese-held China is spun into cloth and thread by Japanese mills, and then smuggled back into Free China, with the enemy collecting on both transactions. In some areas in southern China, tobacco and opium are being grown specially for export into the Japanese-held territory.)

Starving—to Feed the Enemy

Even worse is the traffic in rice. Free China goes hungry while rice by the thousands of tons flows into Japanese hands. The trade flourishes wherever rice is grown, and it fills the enemy bins in Hankow, Shanghai and Canton. This rice is not surplus. Every grain of it is needed to feed Free China. Yet little is done to check the traffic, and great fortunes are piled up by the traders.

The result is inevitable. Famine stalks vast areas, people eat clay and grass, and die, and those who survive would be better off dead. In such areas, rice is sold by the grain; 250 grains for \$1, Chinese. In other areas, men unable to feed their families sell them into slavery by the catty (1½ pounds): \$8, Chinese (the price of a Coke in your corner drugstore) a catty for boys, \$6 a catty for girls, \$4 a catty for infants. Pork is quoted at \$14 a catty. Recent reports show women and children are being shipped inland from the coast for sale.

Last summer an American observer estimated that a third of Kwangtung's 36,000,000 population were facing famine. Later, a missionary who had traveled across south China predicted widespread hunger this winter. He listed three main causes: drought, destruction by the Japanese, sale of rice to the enemy.

The richest rice-producing areas fell to Japan last summer. The Japanese, no doubt, will continue to tempt traders to smuggle what little rice there is out of shrunken Free China. Does the Central Government, as constituted at the time this article is written, hold out any promise of military, political and economic reform?

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This must be explained at the outset: The Central Government is not a democratic government, nor does it claim to be one. All its important posts are held by members of a single party, the Kuomintang; it declines to introduce wide democratic reforms until a year after the war.

This monopoly of political power is one of the main complaints hurled at Chungking. The critics point out that the 2,000,000 members of the Kuomintang hold almost every key political job in Free China. They point out that all officials—and professors—are required to take Kuomintang political training and obey the party leaders. They complain that the Kuomintang has developed an omnipotent secret service and filled huge concentration camps with political suspects.

This indictment is severe. Almost all of it is true. But it errs in blanketing the entire Kuomintang. Actually the Kuomintang is united no more than our political parties. It has its own progressives and reactionaries, its willful men and reformers, its bosses and cliques.

Democrats Without a Party

It has, for instance, Sun Fo, the chubby, 53-year-old son of China's revolutionary saint, Sun Yat-sen. Sun Fo shows a strong concern for the common man, an outspoken interest in social reform, a firm belief in the world's oneness. However, he has no effective backing. No more has the Kuomintang's T. V. Soong, who last month was appointed Acting Premier (he is also Foreign Minister). A brother of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, he is as Western, up-to-date and honest as any banker in a fair-sized Middle Western town.

The Kuomintang has such men as the French-trained geologist Wong Wen-hao (now helping Donald Nelson to set up a Chinese War Production Board), and the able and moderate lawyer Wang Shih-chieh, educated in London and Paris. Both Wong and Wang hold cabinet jobs, both are friends of the United States, both are progressive.

But the Kuomintang also has its vast and dark region of obdurate reaction. It is in this area that one finds the enemies of reform, the foes of China's Communists.

Here stands the 56-year-old General Ho Ying-chin, a foe of Stilwell, a confidant of Chiang Kai-shek and for fourteen years the Minister of War. Until he was ousted a few weeks ago, Americans in Chungking regarded him as the chief obstacle to army reorganization. Here, too, is Major General Tai Li, the sharp-faced, sharp-witted ruthless chief of the secret service whose 40,000 agents do a thorough job of hunting down liberals, Reds and dissidents.

Here, finally, are the famous two Chen brothers—the tough and able masterminds of reaction in Chungking. Close friends of Chiang Kai-shek for two decades, the Chens wield their great power through the Kuomintang party machinery, whose every function—from patronage to the secret service—they control. They are the party bosses to whom democratic reform is anathema, the men whose ideal is the paternalistic, disciplined rural China of Confucian days.

Atop the Kuomintang, with its turbulence, and intrigue, its secret services and its voices desperately crying for reform, sits the most important and the most enigmatic figure of all—Chiang Kai-shek.

Now, fifty-seven, Chiang has grown weary. National and domestic difficulties weigh heavily on him. He flies into rages. He canes a soldier who has roped three recruits; he beats officers who have maltreated their men; he hurls teacups at brother-in-law T. V. Soong in an angry argument.

His mind is still razor-keen, and his political hand agile, but he has found the crisis engulfing China a heavy strain on his resources. He has sought escape by trying to put himself above the indecent scramble for power, but even that has been difficult.

Constantly under pressure endured by no other Allied leader, he has made errors of judgment. Possibly one of them was the famous tea party he gave in Chungking some months ago to a group of government leaders and a handful of foreigners.

After the refreshments had been served, Chiang rose. He and Madame Chiang, he

said, had been aware of malicious rumors regarding his family life and his neglect of official duties. Specifically he denied the report that he had taken a 16-year-old concubine.

He admitted that he had been spending little time at his office. This, he explained, was caused by the acute pain in his back, injured in 1936 in an attempt to escape his kidnapers in Sian. He had been unable to sit still for more than a couple of hours, but he continued to maintain a strenuous working schedule.

He was, Chiang said, a good Christian, a loyal husband, and a faithful servant of his country. The few correspondents present were forbidden to report the incident, but the stunned and embarrassed listeners did not keep their secret well. Madame Chiang soon left for Brazil and New York, where last month she was still receiving medical attention.

Chiang has been adamantly anti-Communist. As late as last August, when the Japanese were already deep in south China, he continued to focus his attention on the Communist problem. He blamed the Communists for the reports of internal unrest and accused American military personnel of encouraging Communist intransigence.

He rejected Ambassador Gaus's shrewd suggestion for a limited war council, embracing representatives of other parties. Gaus argued that a share in responsibility would sober up the critics of the government.

Until the overpowering demands of China's crisis forced a reluctant change, Chiang held fast to his old conception of China as a big, happy family, adhering to the old virtues and philosophy, being ruled by one party, and paying fealty to the family's head. This picture of political bliss was suggested in a book, *China's Destiny*, published under Chiang's name in 1943, which demonstrated a definite antiforeign, antidemocratic, anti-Allied tone. Despite a ban on exportation, some copies have been smuggled out to the U. S.

But whatever Chiang's views, he still remains the only man around whom the nation's war effort can be centered. More than ever he is the symbol of China's resistance and courage, for whom neither the Communists nor any other faction can offer a substitute. With all his limitations, he is still a great leader.

Our Bargain with Chiang

Chiang's government, to survive, must depend heavily on American aid. In September, Donald Nelson told Chiang that such aid would be given and that the American government was anxious to see China emerge as Asia's dominant power—headed by Chiang. But he also made it plain that no assistance could be granted unless Chiang embarked on extensive house cleaning and political reform.

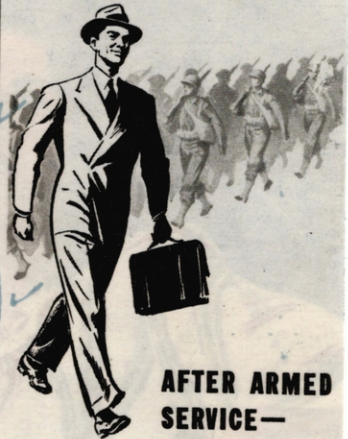
In the end, Chiang accepted the proposals of Nelson and General Patrick Hurley, but he traded his consent for the recall of forthright and unbending Vinegar Joe Stilwell. Out with Stilwell went Gaus, who had taken so much undeserved abuse from the ill-informed ever since he moved into the Chungking embassy.

After the departure of Stilwell and Gaus, Chungking announced many reforms. Some were puny, some important, such as General Chen Cheng's appointment as War Minister. Chen has worked closely with Stilwell, and has been China's leading advocate of army reorganization.

But more important than any appointments were the moves toward a compromise with the Communists, the use of the blockade garrisons to fight Japan, and the slow, halting steps toward industrial reorganization.

It would be idle to say now that the steps taken thus far assure a revitalized, united China. The men who have fought democratic reform so bitterly for so long are still in control of the government and the party. The army command has not been unified, and the foes of army reorganization still wield great power. The only hope is that Chiang Kai-shek will realize the gravity of the crisis, the desperate need for drastic action. The hour of decision is here.

THE END



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