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WAR ZONE TOUR

Japanese Too Weak To Control in North

BEHIND BATTLE LINES

I have recently travelled through a vast region in the rear of the Japanese Army of Invasion in China, writes Miss Agnes Smedley in the *Manchester Guardian*. Before I undertook this journey through the region referred to by the Japanese as their "occupied territory" people looked at me ruefully and said it would be like going through "darkest Africa" and I would be the first foreigner to go there since the war. But there were Chinese armies and guerillas there, and where they can go surely I could go; and there medical workers should go to care for their wounded. So in the first days of September I crossed the Yangtze with a unit of a Chinese army.

At midnight we passed between two Japanese garrison points on the river, each one about one and a third mile on either hand of us. But the Japanese hug their walled defence points at night, and are in effect prisoners within them. The nights belong to the Chinese, and the Japanese fear to venture out. Had the ancient walls around Chinese towns and cities been destroyed long ago—as they are being reluctantly destroyed to-day—the Japanese could not hold most of the points they hold to-day. When we crossed the Yangtze the only traitors were the moon and the dogs that yelped from enemy-occupied towns when they heard the distant thud of our soft-soled feet.

Missionaries Remain

It would be a fine journalistic "stunt" to boast that I had passed through "darkest Africa," that I passed through great danger and hardship, and that I was the first "white man" ever to set foot there. Instead, I found an American business man starting an egg factory in north Anhwei, while Honan and Hupeh are one great American Lutheran "Bible belt" in which missionaries are industriously harvesting souls, some of them preaching that the war, like the countless sicknesses that afflict the Chinese people, is due to sin. But I found also some missionary doctors conducting modern hospitals, and none of them seemed to regard the malaria mosquito, the relapsing fever louse, or the dysentery germ as messengers of the Almighty to punish the "heathen" for their sins. They were ministering to the sick and wounded in a true Christian spirit.

I passed through few hardships other than those incidental to such a long and hard trip through a country at war, where one must ride or walk over vast regions in which all roads had been torn up. The Chinese are the ones to suffer real hardship,

but the only danger I ran was possible death by overeating at the countless banquets given by the Chinese armies and authorities to welcome me. As for danger from the Japanese, the safest place in China is the "enemy rear." The only Japanese you see are those brought in by guerillas, and those captive all begin to lecture in mass meetings telling the people that they were conscripted and forced to come to China, they did not want to come, and would be only too glad to go home.

Villages Destroyed

The only signs of the Japanese were the bombed and burned towns and villages where they had passed in their drive on the Wuhan cities in late 1938. They have been cleared out of all except the main railways and a few strongly fortified walled towns on rivers. There are even great stretches directly along the banks of the Yangtze where they have never been. Even a big occupied walled city like Anking on the Yangtze, was entered by a Kwangsi regiment on the night of May 5 and every Japanese institution demolished and most of the garrison wiped out. This was due to the Japanese-paid puppet army in that city, which led the Kwangsi regiment into the city and later retreated with

it. Those puppet troops have been transformed into a Chinese guerilla force in that same region. Such incidents as this are most common in the areas which the Japanese say they control. They control no territory at all beyond the reach of their machine-guns.

In this enemy rear Chinese administrative organs continue to function right up to within the shadows of occupied towns along the railways and rivers. In Anhwei these administrative organs are being reformed to some extent according to the "Kwangsi system." Many old officials, none too honest, and always inefficient and socially backward, have been replaced by younger men and a few women. These younger officials have been trained for three months in the provisional provincial capital, Lihwang. Sometimes, however, the change is but a change in personnel, for often the new officials are sons or relatives of the old. Not always though. An honest administration will indeed give the Government more revenues. But beyond this no basic social changes are being undertaken, and until these changes come the misery and suffering of the common people cannot be lightened.

Absentee Landlords

Anhwei, for instance, is a region of great landlord estates, often of many thousands of acres. Many owners have fled to the port cities or to the rear, leaving agents to collect the usual rent, which is 50 per cent. of the crop. A few work for the Japanese, and some sit on the fence, waiting to see which side will win. The peasants cultivate their land; their sons are conscripted to fight the Japanese, the older men and young boys are conscripted as carriers for the Army and for the wounded, and for destruction or repair of roads. And they must bear the full burden of repairing the enormous damage done to their homes by the Japanese. In other words, though without rights of citizens, they must still shoulder the full burden of the war while the landlords with their sons and daughters sit in the far rear or in port cities waiting for victory, when they can return to their old feudal luxury. Few people except the peasants see anything wrong with this. But I have met many Army commanders who face this problem, clearly and are sunk in depression because they have no power to change it. For the armies are ordered to fight only and to leave administrative power in the hands of politicians. The war has made colossal changes for the better in the minds of many military men. Under the shadow of death at all times they long for any change of any nature that would strengthen Chinese resistance. But many politicians are interested in preserving social conditions as they were in the past.

Some of some had come to Anking or elsewhere to escape the war.

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WAR ZONE TOUR

Racial Consciousness
in Conquered Area

BITTER OPPOSITION

This is the second of the two trips on a journey behind the Japanese lines in China by Miss Smedley which appeared recently in *Manchester Guardian*. Honan Province does not share the activity of Anhwei. One commissioner over eight *hsien* in eastern Honan expressed himself in this way, "We do not have the system as Anhwei. By this we gain anything, but at the same time we do not lose anything. We are things as they are." "Things as they are" in eastern Honan are in fact bitterly. That region was taken by Soviet, over which poor people fought for years, holding the land as their own. No words can describe the poverty of that region and no human beings have ever lived on a lower level of existence than do the common people. The Communist uprising in Honan in the past was the uprising of serfs against a feudal landlord merchant class. By "keeping things as they are" officials do not change any of the causes that led to the first Communist revolt. Honan's suffering is, still I have never seen more bitterness, hunger, more sickness and death than in that region. That is all Honan, though in a somewhat lesser degree of other parts of the province, except in the north, where poverty is even deeper and inflicted by Japanese deprivations.

Bitter Resistance

The resistance to the Japanese is bitter, but it is a bitter resistance of racial consciousness and indignation only, unrelieved by independent political thought and it is based on conscription—the obedience of the "lower classes" to their rulers. Here and there one can find an enlightened man who wishes his people to be organized and he is led by orders from above. In fact the Japanese are controlling a few points along the railway in the north, and to their farthest point on the Hankow railway, in the south. From Sinyang northward the railway has been totally destroyed and I found a big machine-worked by hand, in which rail-cutters were hammering rails with swords and selling them at (Chinese) each to the local forces of the province. Since the south, is now under attack by the regular Chinese and local guerillas, we approached north Hupeh the man to make itself felt once more we neared one of the fronts of the country.

The Japanese rear is peacefully in Chinese hands, but near the front the days and nights are tense with air raids and with alarms. The terror that sweeps through a Chinese town when an air alarm sounds at night must be lived through to be understood. Doors slam, voices cry, the streets are filled with running feet, children cry for their mothers, mothers scream for their children, and there is a confusion of voices in mortal terror. As we approached this region, which as late as May was a battlefield, I heard once more—for the tenth time—a story, this time from foreigners, that the Japanese burn their severely wounded when in retreat. Both Chinese and foreigners tell this story from towns in which they have been under Japanese occupation. They say that when in retreat, and unable to transport their severely wounded, the Japanese burn not only their dead but their severely wounded. It is said they think this demoralises their army less than if they left their wounded to be captured by the Chinese.

Insufficient Japanese

In the vast region I have traversed a few general facts stand out from the great mass of material I have gathered: (1) The Japanese do not control their rear at all, but their rear is a Chinese base and a Chinese front; they do not have enough forces to control their rear. (2) Chinese resistance and moral are much stronger than in the first period of the war—the armies and guerillas have learned much and are confident of victory; they seemed determined to struggle until the last Japanese is driven out of their country. (3) There is much development of national consciousness in all armed Chinese forces and amongst the common people. This varies in degree; in some it is low, on a level of self-preservation; in some armies it is a national consciousness only; in armies such as the guerillas and mobile forces under Communist control it is national and international in character and is deeper and broader than in others. (4) Many parts of the country remain unorganised, some conservative authorities still fearing for their own future power if the people are organized and educated about their own rights as citizens. (5) The actual fighters of the nation are primarily peasants, with some workers and hand-workers. The poor of the nation are doing the fighting. A few new lower officers are former students, but students or other educated elements are never fighters. Wherever a fringe of educated men is to be found in any army or region it is as political workers only. Conscription applies to the poor only, not to the "better classes," not even to medical workers, who are so badly needed. (6) Japanese goods are found everywhere in the Lower Yangtze Valley, often masquerading under foreign or Chinese labels. Industrial co-operatives are to be found in north Hupeh only, though there is a growing consciousness of their need everywhere. Some officials fear industrial co-operatives because these place economic power in the hands of the people themselves. (7) There is a general improvement in the hospital equipment of the Army Medical Service of the Ministry of War and an inadequate though steady supply of drugs. But the technical knowledge and

methods of the medical personnel have not improved.

The Medical Services

The Army Medical Service has built up a good stretcher-bearer service from the front to the rear, with some three hundred men in each "company" and with medical workers attached to each. I have seen these stretcher-bearers, in the dead of winter, remove their jackets and cover the wounded they carry, for the wounded have no covering save their padded uniform.

There is a greater consciousness of the problem of the wounded among military commanders than ever before; in this respect the Army has advanced rapidly, as in many other directions. The Chinese Red Cross medical units continue to do heroic service in Army field and base hospitals, but their personnel remains insufficient. A few modern Christian doctors from Shanghai have volunteered and are to be found in Army hospitals; they operate as mobile units and are supported and supplied by the New Life Movement.

My own general attitude after this trip is this: a vast respect for the soldiers and commanders at the front, but a most critical attitude towards much that I hear about the life of people in the rear, particularly war profiteers and politicians.