

CHAPTER 6

NEW YEAR

31 DECEMBER

TWO OF THE MALE OCCUPANTS of my Siemens Camp who were loitering outside the gate today were abducted by Japanese soldiers and forced to carry looted goods for them. When I returned home at noon, the wife of one of them knelt before me pleading for me to bring the men back, because otherwise they would surely be murdered. I then drove back down Chung Shan Lu with this truly shabby looking woman until we found the men in question. I stood across from about 20 armed Japanese soldiers, who did not want to hand the two Chinese over. It wasn't a pleasant situation; I finally did prevail but was very happy to have the expedition behind me.

I gave these two foolish fellows a stern lecture in front of the assembled residents of the camp. I cannot go running after each of my 630 refugees if the rascals are stupid enough to get themselves caught. Why had they crept in here with me if not to hide? I issued a warning that I would not undertake a rescue like this a second time. It's simply too dangerous over the long haul.

Japanese soldiers are being issued three-day passes for the New Year. There has been a promise that the Zone will be off-limits to strolling soldiers, but I don't trust their peace. Tomorrow, 1 January 1938, the Autonomous Government will be solemnly constituted.

1 JANUARY 1938

At 9:30 yesterday evening, my seven trusty lads, the Americans Fitch, Dr. Smythe, Dr. Wilson, Mills, Dr. Bates, McCallum, and Riggs, came to wish me a "Happy New Year." We emptied the last bottle of red wine and chatted for an hour. Since Dr. Bates, usually one of our liveliest minds, dozed off in his armchair from sheer exhaustion, the party broke up early. And since neither my Chinese guests nor I placed any value on sacrificing a good night's sleep, we were all in bed by eleven o'clock.

Around 7 a.m. our boy Chang appeared to tell me that his wife had suffered a relapse. I quickly got dressed and brought her and Chang to Kulou Hospital for the third time.

When I return home in my car, I am received with a royal salute. The *lao bai xing*,³⁰ my poor refugees, have formed two long lines and in my honor set off thousands of fireworks they've been given by the Japanese to celebrate the establishment of the new Autonomous Government. Then all my six hundred parishioners surround me and give me a New Year's greeting written in red ink on white wrapping paper. They all bow three times and are very happy when I bow my head in gratitude and fold up the greeting and put it in my pocket. What a shame the paper is so big. There's no possible way I can fit it into this book. One of my Chinese friends translates the greeting as follows:

For Mr. Rabe,
with best wishes for
a happy year.
Hundreds of millions are close to you!
The refugees of your camp
1938.

I'm still not sure what "hundreds of millions" means. It's probably to be read as "hundreds of millions of good spirits." When I ask number-one boy Chang, he puts it very succinctly: "In German mean just *Prosit Neujahr!*"

After I had finally escaped the shower of sparklers and firecrackers, all

the servants and employees appeared in a solemn procession to make their usual New Year's kowtow.

Sperling and Riggs pay me a New Year's visit at noon and each is given a cigar as a present—a princely gift. Cigars now cost from five to seven dollars apiece here. Besides which, Sperling gets a new razor, since his was recently stolen. At 9 in the evening, several Japanese soldiers appear in a truck and demand girls. When we don't open the gate, they finally move on. We watch them drive on to the Middle School, which is constantly harassed. I beef up the night guard in the garden, teams of two with whistles, so that I can be on the spot even faster if intruders honor us with a visit. But everything remains quiet, thank God.

2 JANUARY

Several Japanese soldiers have broken into a building next to Safety Zone Headquarters. Women and girls flee over the wall onto our grounds. Kröger gets up on our dugout and jumps from there over the very high garden wall. I want to follow; a policeman helps me up, and we both lose our balance and fall off the wall. But we land in a fairly heavy stand of bamboo that breaks our fall, so no one is hurt. Meanwhile Kröger has collared the Japanese; they immediately make themselves scarce. Ostensibly they were only inspecting!

The wife of my neighbor, the woman with the bayonet slashes whom I sent to Kulou Hospital, has been released again as cured. Since she has no money and has been in the hospital for ten days at a cost of 80 cents a day, I take care of her bill.

The common people have been plundered and are poorer than ever. Yesterday, while the orators of the new Autonomous Government were speaking of cooperation, several buildings torched by the Japanese were burning to the right and left of Kulou Hospital where the ceremony took place.

Mr. Sun, who is the vice chairmen of the new Autonomous Government and a member of the Red Swastika Society and speaks Japanese, condescendingly informs me that he must speak to me very soon about an important matter. Please do, I've been waiting for this. I have a very good idea of what your intentions are!

The streets of the Zone are still packed with people: Untold thousands just stand around or barter and trade. The sides of the streets are taken over by peddlers, most of them offering food, tobacco, and old clothes.

Everyone is running around with Japanese armbands or flying Japanese flags. In the side streets or on vacant lots between streets, entire villages of the refugees' straw huts have sprung up, just like the one in my garden. There's not a blade of grass left growing in my garden, and the lovely hedges have all been trampled underfoot. It's inevitable with such numbers of people—they simply want to live.

Last night there was another series of atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers, all of which Dr. Smythe has written up. As usual we shall present the list in the form of a protest to the Japanese embassy.

Today we received our first visit from Chinese bombers over Nanking, something we've long been quietly worried about. And they certainly did not come as friends, but as foes! They dropped their bombs just as punctually as the Japanese before them, but so far, thank God, on pretty much the same target, the area around the airport south of the city. Japanese anti-aircraft fire was also in evidence, but only just a little and very weak.

We'll have to wait and see if these air raids remain restricted to the area outside our Zone; but we hope so. If that is not the intention, then the results could be far worse than before. Even Shanghai at noon is not as heavily populated as the streets of our Zone at present. One bomb landing in that bustling throng could cost a thousand lives. The mere thought makes me shudder.

3 JANUARY

At 7 o'clock yesterday evening Dr. Smythe came by with the following note addressed to Mr. Fitch from Dr. Hsü, a physician:

Dear Mr. Fitch:

Liu Pan-kwen, who had attempted to protect his wife from being raped by a Japanese soldier, was shot and killed today by the latter at about 4:30 p.m. this afternoon.

Since the house next door is occupied by Japanese soldiers, our house is now full of women who have fled to us. I have written Mr. Sperling and asked him to come quickly to us and stay here to protect us. If Mr. Sperling is not available, can you perhaps send another foreigner who can stay at Ninhai Lu No. 5 and protect us?

Sincerely yours,
DR. C. Y. HSÜ

While Dr. Smythe went out to look for Sperling, who is to camp out on Ninhai Lu for the night, I drove to the Japanese embassy with John Magee, who has received a full report of this crime, in order to ask Mr. Tanaka to petition the Japanese military authorities to investigate the matter. It's a case of brutal premeditated murder.

Early yesterday morning, the Japanese soldier had tried to rape Liu's wife, the mother of 5 children. The husband came in and with some slaps in the face forced the Japanese to leave. That afternoon the soldier, who had been unarmed in the morning, returned with a gun, looked for and found Liu hiding in the kitchen, and shot him, even though all Liu's neighbors pled for the man's life and one even knelt down before the Japanese soldier.

Tanaka promised to advise the military of the incident at once. I do not doubt that he kept his promise, but we have heard nothing of the matter since. We also have yet to hear of any punishment given any soldier other than a few slaps.

Perhaps as a way of consoling me, Tanaka then tells me a very welcome bit of news, that is, that Dr. Rosen and presumably Hürter and Scharffenberg, who are currently staying in Wuhu, will arrive in Nanking on 5 January, the same day that the gentlemen of the American embassy have announced for their visit.

Meanwhile, Krischan Kröger has been on Purple Mountain. The observatory is in ruins and the path to the top more or less demolished, but still passable. I'm not at all pleased by Kröger's little strolls. He should not place himself in danger so often for no compelling reason—but try and tell him that!

L A T E R

Water has been restored to the city today, so we now have running water in our bathroom on the second floor. At noon there was even power in a few areas of the Zone, but it was turned off again at around 1 o'clock, probably to keep us from listening to news on the radio.

The reports reviewing our soup kitchens and refugee camps provide an interesting insight into how our committee and its subcommittees have to go about their rather difficult business: Some Chinese are not at all shy about "squeezing." We are in China, and nothing gets done without a "squeeze."

Today in my garden I caught a vegetable peddler demanding cut-throat prices. Some women in the camp were about to buy him out. I was able to stop it and showed the fellow the gate.

4 JANUARY

Unfortunately I live a bit too close to the Safety Zone border. I can't stop worrying about the chance that my house may go up in flames. Yesterday three buildings in the vicinity were torched, and as I write this a new cloud of smoke is rising in the south. The city, by the way, is still dark, although the turbines at Hsiakwan are said to be intact. We keep up a steady stream of protests, but without any visible results. Some improvement in our general situation is apparent now that a troop of military police has been specially charged with guarding the Safety Zone, but even among these *shen bings*³¹ there are some dubious elements who either close both eyes at once or participate in atrocities themselves.

5 JANUARY

In the review of the individual refugee camps, the Siemens Camp did not do very well. Mr. Han has given our refugees a little too much rice. He's a kind man, that's all! The suggestion that some of the refugees be sent to another camp, because the 5,500 square feet in my garden are too small for 602 people, has met with no favor. People feel safe here with me and don't want to leave. So there's really nothing that can be done.

I'm very worried about the sanitation problem. I have no idea what to do about it and can only hope no epidemics break out. We had city water until this morning, but it dried up at noon. We still don't have light. And houses are burning down all around us.

Registration is still not complete. You see tens of thousands of women with babies in their arms standing five abreast in long lines waiting out in the open for up to six hours. How these people endure waiting in the cold like that is a mystery to me.

The Hanchung Men, the gate that was opened yesterday, has been closed again today. Kröger saw about 300 corpses in a dry ditch near the gate: civilians who had been machine-gunned there. They don't want to let Europeans outside the gates. They probably fear that something about conditions here might get published too soon.