

CHAPTER 9

THE JAPANESE WANT TO CLEAR THE SAFETY ZONE

26 JANUARY

I AM FORCED TO record once again that the dead Chinese soldier just beyond my house has still not been buried. How long will such incredible conditions go on here? It's said that a very high-ranking Japanese is on his way, someone not attached to the local military, but answerable directly to Tokyo. He's supposed to restore order. It's high time.

Today a young American arrived by car, accompanied by a Japanese guard. He wants to sell some large timber holdings of an Anglo-American lumber company to the Japanese. This man, who is attached to the British embassy, reports that on his trip from Shanghai they encountered a total of perhaps 60 people in the first 50 miles, and that Nanking is the only city with any number of inhabitants worth mentioning. All the other cities between here and Shanghai are as good as dead.

It's a shock to drive through the deserted streets outside our Zone and



Shanghai Road, the main street of the Safety Zone

be able to simply walk into any house, since all the doors have been ripped off or just stand wide open, and to witness destruction barbaric beyond all comprehension.

You shake your head and ask yourself why this pointless devastation, particularly since it's been clear for some time from the actions of the Japanese embassy that they're very ashamed of the Japanese military's conduct. They try to cover things up wherever it's even vaguely feasible. And the ban on anyone entering or leaving is one of their ways of keeping the world ignorant of Nanking's present state. Even though that can last only for a short time, because ever since the Germans, Americans, and British restaffed their embassies here, hundreds of letters have been sent to Shanghai describing local conditions in precise detail, not to mention all the embassies' telegraphed reports.

The Safety Zone is the only place in Nanking showing any sign of life. New peddler's booths keep springing up along the streets in its center. Early each morning, usually still in the twilight, the Chinese drag into the Zone anything that they still own amid these ruins and that's still worth

trading—or presumed worth trading—and try to find a willing buyer who has a few dollars for something other than food. The crowd presses shoulder to shoulder through this city of booths, this permanent Poverty Fair of indescribable want, where there is a revaluation of every value according to the current price of life's necessities like rice, flour, meat, salt, vegetables—and of its delights, like tobacco!

We are trying to get the German, American, and British embassies to help us in regard to supplies of rice that we still have stored in warehouses that are now the property of the Japanese. But there is little prospect of success.

All three gentlemen shake doubtful heads. We can hardly expect the Japanese to hand over these remaining supplies at some point. On the contrary, they will make every effort to prevent us from bringing in any more food. We are in their way, and the Japanese authorities want to be rid of us. With each new day, we make ourselves more unpopular, and are afraid that one fine day they'll simply pack us all off to Shanghai.

Letter from Siemens China Co., Shanghai, to John Rabe

Shanghai, 14 January 1938

Dear Herr Rabe,

From various reports in the newspapers and above all from your messages that have found their way through to your wife we are very happy to learn that you are all right. We hope that communications will be restored soon, so that we can receive your messages about company concerns, the state of the Capital Electricity Works and other important matters.

Enclosed, a list of the residential and office buildings of Hapro in Nanking, which we have received from Herr Eckert, along with the request that, if possible, you determine the condition of these buildings and pass that information along to him.

We have no clear notion here of what sort of freedom of movement you enjoy there, but, like Herr Eckert, we would be grateful for whatever determinations you can make and inform us about.

As before, our thoughts and best wishes are with you.

With German greetings,
Siemens China Co.

DR. PROBST

MAIER

27 JANUARY

Today is the Kaiser's birthday. And a little commemoration is probably harmless, even for a Nazi. Anyone born under the Kaiser's government has never entirely forgotten him. I long for the return of those days, but not of the Kaiser, because I prefer Hitler; but as I said: you can't shake off the memory, for on this day the ghosts of so many dead rise up, ghosts of those who happily and proudly marched in parade in their colorful uniforms. Dust and ashes now, all of them, or almost all. May they rest easy in their graves!

According to radio reports from Shanghai, the French government has named Pater Jacquinot a Knight of the Legion of Honor. Given all that we have been through here, and the difficulties that our committee here, all 15 men, have overcome only with the greatest of effort, the man (who had only himself) must have accomplished some incredible things and rightly deserves his knighthood.

I drove this morning through the East City with Dr. Rosen. All the buildings have been looted of everything and about a third of them have been burned down.

We've just hear the terrible news that McCallum, who is in charge of Kulou Hospital, has been attacked with a bayonet by two Japanese soldiers who forced their way into the hospital without permission, and has been wounded in the neck. Fortunately, the wound appears not to be life-threatening, but this is a very serious incident and the American and Japanese governments will be informed at once by telegram.

FROM THE FAMILY DIARY

N.N. is a cause of great sorrow and worry again! He bought a wonderful automobile from the servant of Pan-chen Lama for 200 dollars. The new Autonomous Government now wants to buy the car from him, and because they know that N.N. paid only 200 dollars for it, they're offering 600 dollars, instead of the 1,900 dollars N.N. is demanding. Moreover, the Autonomous Government Committee has informed us that the servant of Pan-chen Lama had no right to sell the car, since it was the property of the Chinese government. If N.N. continues his profiteering like this, one of these days the Japanese authorities will expel him from Nanking, heaping curses and shame on his head.

Letter from John Rabe to His Wife in Shanghai

Nanking, 27 January 1938

My Dear Dora,

The English consul, Mr. Prideaux-Brune, will be coming to Shanghai shortly aboard an English gunboat. He will be bringing a lot of mail with him, among which are three thick envelopes for you, containing:

My Diary in Nanking:

Vol. II, part 2

Vol. III, parts 1 and 2

Vol. IV, parts 1 and 2

Vol. V, part 1

Vol. I as well as the first part of Vol. II are either on board the *Kutwo* or in storage in Hankow.

What I am sending you today includes the period from the day the *Kutwo* left Nanking until yesterday—the heart of the matter. These pages were written for you. I'll have them bound later. The first volume is already bound. If you decide to give all or part of these books to anyone to read—that's up to you. But nothing can be published without the permission of the Party. And so Herr Lahrmann⁴⁶ in Shanghai will have to be asked first. But I think it's better if you don't have any of it published until I'm there, because I very much doubt that the Reich will give its permission. Besides which, like all my books, it's not really written for the general public, but for you and the rest of the family. I don't know when I can get away from here. I can move about freely inside the city; but I may not leave the city, at least not for now.

My warmest greetings and kisses
Your JOHN Y

Letter from John Rabe to His Wife

Nanking, 28 January 1938

My dear Dora,

I forgot to ask you in the letter I enclosed with my diaries yesterday to telegraph me when the books have arrived via the German embassy, which can then forward the telegram via the American consulate general. The American embassy here has a wireless receiver and sender in its

building. If you telegraph me the word BUGAN, I'll read it as: "*Bücher gut angekommen.*" [Books arrived safely.]

I made some inquiries yet again at the Japanese embassy yesterday. I can get permission to leave, but will not be able then to return to Nanking in the foreseeable future. I'm waiting to hear from the firm whether I should leave or not. If I do leave, I'll have to leave everything—Committee, house, furniture, the employees—behind at loose ends. As I see it, it can be another six months or a whole year before the war is over. So: What to do?

Many warm greetings and kisses
Your JOHNY

*Memorandum of Chancellor P. Scharffenberg
to the German Embassy in Hankow*

The situation in Nanking as of 28 January 1938

The food supply provided by the Japanese is completely inadequate. If we were to rely on them, we would starve. Yesterday Sindberg, the Dane from the cement factory, brought us another little pig, eggs, two ducks. Granted, he was arrested on the way here, but by subsidizing the sentries with a crate of beer he got through under the guard of three men and an officer. We gave some of it to the other Germans and the houseboys and police who live off us. There are no onions to be had, and very few vegetables. So all the foreigners, who are afraid of scurvy on a diet of nothing but rice, are desperate for apples, which are available from Japanese canteens—but only for yen. And so everyone is in pursuit of yen. Our hundred yen are gone, because we gave some to all the Germans and a few foreigners.

The number of Japanese canteens has been increased. They sell mainly beer and sake. It's incredible how much beer the Japanese can down, hundreds of crates from a truckload are sold in no time. The Japanese deliberately killed all domestic animals, e.g., all the water buffalo. Pigs were beheaded and left lying there. Ponies and donkeys have all been confiscated. It's comical to watch the Japanese riding donkeys, they even harness them to the rickshas. More and more Chinese are risking leaving the Safety Zone, but only during the day. Mostly it's just aged women and children, who happily loot while the Japanese watch. My impression is that the Japanese encourage this in order to shift the blame away from themselves.

As before, we can't take one step outside without being accompanied by a gendarme. Like political criminals!

SCHARFFENBERG

28 JANUARY

Mr. Tanaka quite unexpectedly granted Mr. Fitch permission to leave for Shanghai today and return six days later. He's traveling aboard the English gunboat *Bee* and will return in a week on the American gunboat *Oahu*. The whole thing seems a little fishy to me, especially since they've given him nothing in writing, no travel pass or the like.

Yesterday evening, when I asked Fukui to give Fitch permission to leave and return, he brusquely refused. Maybe they are somewhat easier on the Americans today because in the meantime they've had a few unpleasant incidents with the Japanese. Yesterday Mr. Allison, the deputy at the American embassy, was even slapped in the face by a Japanese soldier. The incident was reported to Washington at once and was the latest news today on the radio from London. The Japanese have indeed apologized to Mr. Allison for the slaps, but they insist Allison provoked the soldier by speaking rudely to him in Japanese.

Dr. Rosen has made himself unpopular again, too. Yesterday he accompanied me on a drive through the East City but didn't want to take along the Japanese guard assigned to him. My friendly persuasion accomplished nothing. The incident has been reported to the Japanese embassy, which sent me the following statement today:

"There are still Chinese soldiers in plainclothes in Nanking. Japanese soldiers are instructed to shoot at every suspicious person. That is why embassy officials are given a Japanese guard for protection."

To which one can only say that if there really are any plainclothes Chinese left, they certainly would have nothing against a few foreigners because by now every child knows that we remained behind to protect the Chinese.

We have received news that the Japanese want to close all refugee camps on 4 February. The refugees are supposed to return to the devastated city and it doesn't matter where they live amid the ruins. This could be awful; but we don't know how to avert this calamity. The military has all the power.

29 JANUARY

Mr. Prideaux-Brune, the English consul, and Mr. George Fitch left on the *Bee* this morning at 9 o'clock, and with them my diaries. No one believes

that Fitch will return in the foreseeable future. Tension between the Europeans and the Japanese is growing daily. We are seriously considering dissolving the Zone Committee and creating a Relief Committee that would cooperate with the new Autonomous Government Committee.

I keep suggesting that we cooperate with the Japanese, but the Americans are against it, and until I have the approval of the entire committee, I can't approach the Japanese, nor can I be sure that they even will consent. Maybe it's too late already for cooperation of this sort. The favorable moment may very well have passed.

On the other hand, we're as good as paralyzed if, as threatened, the Japanese forcibly close all refugees camps on 4 February and then place the refugees in concentration camps that we are forbidden to enter, just as they've done with the Red Cross hospitals.

I learn that the German embassy has received a letter from the Japanese thanking them for all the help given the refugees and likewise informing them that the refugee camps must be closed down on 4 February. I call a meeting of all committee members, and we decide to have our embassies ascertain the following by official or other means:

1. Can the Japanese remove refugees from a camp that is on foreign property or in a house belonging to a foreigner? A large number of the camps are on American property; my own camp would likewise fit in this category, since it is on the grounds of a German.
2. Can we take more refugees into our camps?
3. We also ask our embassies to refrain from answering Japanese letters about this matter until we have clarified our standpoint.

John Magee found two girls, aged eight and four, whose entire family of eleven had been murdered in the most gruesome fashion. The two girls remained in a room with the body of their mother for 14 days until they were rescued by a neighbor. The older one had fed herself and her sister from small stores of rice that were still in the house. [See pp. 281-282]

30 JANUARY

We have stated our committee's concerns in a letter to Dr. Rosen and have asked him to confer with the Japanese about them. I admit I have no great hope that we will accomplish much; because Dr. Rosen is not exactly persona grata with the Japanese—more like non grata. Nonetheless an at-

tempt must be made to dissuade the Japanese from forcing Chinese refugees out of the Zone on 4 February. Dr. Rosen was chosen for the task, because, since I, a German, am chairman of the committee, it would be best to proceed through the German embassy or its representatives.

Our camp has been transformed into a swamp once again. There were two days of heavy snowfall, and now the snow is melting. With heavy hearts, my 600 refugees are getting accustomed to the idea that they will have to leave the camp on 4 February. Most of these people live not all too far from my house and can quickly return here in an emergency.

Han and I started a private collection for the poorest of the poor, about 100 people. We have collected 100 dollars and so are able to give each of these people one dollar, which made them all very very happy.

What vast misery, and tomorrow is Chinese New Year, the biggest holiday of the poor Chinese people! The committee has given my camp, which is a relatively small one, a special extra grant of five dollars to buy spices to season the New Year's rice—five dollars for 600 people! Sadly, we cannot do more than that, but the money is gratefully accepted all the same. Moreover, everyone is to receive (on the sly) one teacup of rice in addition to their daily very scant ration of two cups.

Hatz, our auto mechanic, appeared today in the office in a new pair of top boots that he "commandeered" from Pinckernelle's room, though with Kröger's permission, or so he says! Well, none of us really objects. Hatz is a poor devil himself, and Pinckernelle has a good heart and by now probably has his long legs under a desk somewhere in lovely Shanghai or Hong Kong.

Report of the Safety Zone Committee, 31 January 1938

On Sunday, January 30, police and a soldier representing the Special Service Corps came to some of the camps and told them that the refugees must move out by February 4 or their belongings would be sealed up in the camp and the buildings sealed.

Meanwhile cases come in which indicate that order is far from complete either inside or especially outside the Safety Zone. But it is encouraging to note in some of the cases on the 30th, military police actually arrested soldiers caught in the act. Hitherto it has usually only been a slap or requirement to salute that has been used for punishment of soldiers.

The following cases are only the ones we have been able to get first hand reports of: (the first two are cases overlooked in typing up previous reports.)

209) On January 24th, at 11:00 p.m., two Japanese soldiers entered the Agricultural Implements Shop at 11 Hu Chia Tsai Yuen. They wore light armbands. They threatened the storekeeper with a gun and searched him. Then they took away a woman, raped her, and released her two hours later. (Note: This case involves forcible and irregular entry, intimidation by military weapons, abduction, rape.) The Japanese proclamation on the house door was torn down. Mr. Riggs and Mr. Bates took the woman in a car to see if she could identify the house. She pointed the way to 32 Hsiao Fen Chao and identified that as the place. It is the district office of the military police. Dr. Bates filed a protest with the American embassy because it occurred on University of Nanking property. On the afternoon of January 26th, two gendarmes, a Japanese interpreter, and Mr. Takadama went with Mr. Riggs and Mr. Allison to investigate at the shop and at the above military police office. Then they took the woman to the Japanese embassy for questioning. She was returned on the night of January 27th at 8:30 after 28 hours in custody with the following report:

Since she had made a mistake in the number of steps from the first floor to the second, in the color of the bed cover, in describing the electric light instead of the oil lamp used, and did not know the time she was taken (others at the shop stated the time as they were all aroused), the rape did not occur in this particular house and therefore it was not the military police but ordinary soldiers and the soldiers involved had been punished. Since it was not the military police office, therefore the statement that it was, was merely anti-Japanese propaganda by the American embassy. (This report was given to Dr. Bates and Mr. Riggs at 3 Ping Tsang Hsiang by Mr. Takadama and his interpreter. Riggs—Bates)

210) January 21, night, two Japanese soldiers came to 44 Kao Chia Chiu Kwan and asked for women. Fortunately the women in the family had gone to the University Middle School the day before. The family is very poor. So they went next door and found two women and raped them right there in front of their husbands. On the 22nd the two soldiers came back with two other soldiers and stood in front of the house and laughed. (Sone)

211) January 25, afternoon, a Chinese woman came to the University Hospital. She and her husband had moved into the Safety Zone and were living in a straw hut near the Bible Teachers' Training School. On December 13 her husband was taken away by the Japanese soldiers and the wife, this woman, was taken to South City where she has been ever since. She has been raped every day from seven to ten times since but usually was given an opportunity to sleep at night. She has developed all three types of venereal disease in their most virulent forms: Syphilis, Gonorr-

rhea, Chancroid. She was let go five days ago probably because of her diseased condition. She returned to the Zone then. (*Wilson*)

212) January 29, in the afternoon a young woman from one of the refugee camps went to Moh Tsou Lu to buy flour and was one of about 20 girls picked up in a truck by Japanese soldiers. They carried her to Fu Tze Miao where she was assigned to a military office according to her account. A Chinese servant took pity on her weeping and suggested a possible means of escape. While the officers were eating, she put her finger in her throat, then gagged, whereupon the officers sent her out of the room. She managed thus to escape and found her way back to the refugee camp the next morning at 2 a.m. (*Bates*)

LATER

At 4 o'clock this afternoon, my car was stopped on Hankow Road by a group of about 50 Chinese, who asked me to rescue a woman whom a Japanese soldier had led away to rape. The soldier had vanished into No. 4 Shue Chia Hsiang, to which I am then led.

I find the house completely looted, the floor covered with all sorts of debris. In one of the open rooms is a coffin on a bier, and in the room adjoining, lying on a floor covered with straw and junk, I see the soldier, who is about to rape the woman.

I manage to pull the soldier out of the room and into the entryway. When he sees all the Chinese and my car, he pulls away and disappears somewhere in the ruins of nearby buildings. The crowd stands at the door, murmuring, but quickly disperses when I tell them to, so as not to attract more Japanese soldiers.

4:30 p.m.: Worship service in the Ping Tsang Hsian.

6:00 p.m.: Smythe and I for tea at Dr. Rosen's.

8:00 p.m.: Dinner with Sperling and Hatz at the home of Scharffenberg and Hürter. We send Dr. Lautenschlager, our local group leader, a telegram on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Hitler's assumption of power.

FROM THE FAMILY DIARY

What I have always secretly feared has come to pass: rancor and quarrels among the few Germans here. Yesterday at the Scharffenberg-Hürter dinner, Sperling and Hatz got into it. The latter is an Austrian or Hungarian

and sometimes not very careful about what he says. As tempers warmed under the influence of alcohol—none of us can really handle alcohol anymore—an argument arose about the ridiculous question as to whether the Japanese were treating us relatively well or badly. Since I'm of the opinion that we are definitely not being treated well, I got involved in the argument, too, and had to oppose Hatz; but we finally did at least part in peace!

Relations between Rosen and Scharffenberg-Hürter are not of the best. This stems primarily from the fact that Dr. Rosen wants to shake his Japanese guards when he goes out for a spin in his car or, if you like, is driving it on official business. Scharffenberg-Hürter, however, are of the opinion—and I agree with them absolutely—that it would be advisable to acquiesce to the instructions of the Japanese military in this regard, but Dr. Rosen will not hear of it. By the by, Dr. Rosen helps out whenever he can, as do Scharffenberg and Hürter. I hope that this discord resolves itself, but disagreement among us few Germans is the worst thing that can happen to us.