

CHAPTER 10

THE LIVING BUDDHA

31 JANUARY

CHINESE NEW YEAR'S DAY: formal ceremony of congratulation by servants and employees. The refugees stand lined up in rows in the garden and bow to me three times. There are many young girls among them. They all thank me for the protection I've provided, for saving them, which however is not yet a done deed. They present me with a six-by-nine-foot red silk banner inscribed in Chinese, a statement of gratitude, I presume.

I hand the banner on to my houseboy Chang, who to my dismay solemnly rolls it out across the living room. A number of Chinese guests stand reverently gazing at it, and one of them translates the text into English:

You are the Living Buddha
for hundred thousand people.

Until then I had been listening only with one ear, but that was going too far. I gave the speaker a closer look. He was a high official of the former

Chinese government, no special friend of mine, but a man who knew the classics, a scholar. I asked him to translate the Chinese text again, but without any flattering addenda. Yes, he said, what I just read is correct; but one can, of course, translate it more precisely, perhaps like this:

You have the heart of a Buddha
and share his bold spirit.
You have saved thousands of poor people
from danger and want.
May the favor of Heaven be granted to you,
May good luck follow you,
May God's blessing rest upon you!

The Refugees of Your Camp

If these were not such perilous times, I could almost laugh at this touching dedication. I've not even resigned yet from my post as mayor, and here they are making me a living Buddha for thousands of poor people! But I don't dare take any real delight in this gift, which was brought into the house amid exploding fireworks, because 4 February looms ahead, the day when all these poor people are to be forced from my garden camp. I still hope, however, that by showing my German flag I can prevent the worst. God grant it be so! You grow weary in this constant battle against a demoralized Japanese soldiery!

艾拉塔先道

濟難扶危
佛心俠骨
共祝天庥
得爾戡穀

一九三八年一月
本院隆政公獻

Our houseboy Chang has just arrived with the following report: At 11 o'clock this morning, Wu Hsiu Chen, a girl of twenty-four in my refugee camp, was raped by a Japanese soldier in her old house, Kwang Chou Lu No. 46. She had gone to the house to prepare a midday meal for her uncle, who had returned to the house by order of the Japanese. Bayonet in hand, the soldier demanded she give in to him if she did not want to be killed.

LATER

I was happy to discover that the dead Chinese soldier who has been lying at my door for six weeks now has at last been buried.

1 FEBRUARY

Dr. Rosen protests sending the telegram I mentioned to Dr. Lautenschlager. To keep peace, we yield, because Rosen was in fact not invited to the dinner during which we composed the telegram. So we can't really claim that all the Germans of Nanking were present at the celebration.

Complaints of Chinese families who have returned to their homes are coming in from all sides now, accusing Japanese soldiers of raping their wives and daughters. Many have returned to the Zone for that reason. We don't know what else to do but take them in.

2 FEBRUARY

Some statistics put together by Han show that of the 135 refugee families, who make up the total of over 600 people in my garden, 24 families have no home to which to return, the buildings have been burned down. Several refugees returned home amid tears yesterday. They do not trust the Japanese military, and rightly so. Reports from two camps already show quite clearly that public safety has not yet been established.

General Homma arrived here yesterday from Tokyo vested with special powers to establish order. Almost everyone doubts that he can succeed in the two days he is to remain here. Dr. Rosen spoke with him about the plight of the refugees as described in my letter of 30 January, and Rosen's impression was that we are not to expect much from him to make us smile.

At noon today I joined Dr. Rosen at his house for *tiffin* with Hidaka of the Japanese embassy in Shanghai. We have had to register 88 offenses by Japanese soldiers over the last three days. That is even worse than what we experienced in this regard in December. Hidaka, into whose hand I press

our report, apologizes for these "Japanese rascals," but offers as an excuse that such things occasionally happen when troops are being relieved. The old bad troops were ostensibly sent off on 28 January and behaved badly yet again before being sent off.

I've heard this particular excuse before, but we believe we have proof that the rapes, etc. that have been reported were committed by the new troops.

To my question whether the refugees will in fact be removed from the camps in the Zone on 4 February by force, Hidaka replied that as far as he was informed no force whatever would be employed. Those refugees who left the Zone before 4 February would therefore be granted some easing of their conditions on their return home, that is, those refugees whose houses have been burned down are to have other houses made available to them, etc. According to Hidaka's figures, 80,000 refugees have already reported their return to their old homes. I point out to Hidaka that we have pleaded with the refugees on several occasions to return to their homes, especially since we, too, are very interested in seeing the Zone disbanded soon, but that the return of the refugees is dependent solely on public safety in parts of the city outside the Zone. Hidaka asks that we not tell the Chinese that the Japanese will not employ force to disband the Zone, in order not to bog down the process even further. I promise him not to make the news public.

From Dr. Trautmann in Hankow I hear that the Chinese prime minister, H. H. Kung, wishes to express his gratitude for our work. I officially pass the news on to the committee.

3 FEBRUARY

The same spectacle can be seen now in all the refugee camps. In my garden, about 70 girls and women are on their knees, banging their heads against the ground. Their weeping and wailing would melt a heart of stone. They don't want to leave my garden camp, because they are quite rightly afraid that they will be raped by Japanese soldiers. They keep wailing the same thing over and over: "You are our father and our mother. You have protected us till now, don't stop half way! If we are going to be violated and have to die, then we want to die here!"

Impressive language. And one cannot close oneself off to such justifiable laments. I have allowed them to stay on. Only a couple of old people have left.

I hope Hidaka told the truth when he said that the Japanese military will not use force to drive the refugees from the Zone. I have had so many

disappointments by now that I am ready for anything. Every member of our committee will be on the alert tomorrow. We have gradually lost all patience with this pack of soldiers, whom Japanese officials politely call rascals, but whom we call a "murderous pack." If these bandits have been given permission by their authorities to force their way into our camps, clashes will be unavoidable.

Chang has just told me that of the seventeen people living in a small house near the end of the street where our old house used to be, six have been killed because they sank to their knees outside the house and begged the Japanese soldiers to spare their daughters. After the old people had been shot, the girls were dragged away and raped. Out of the entire family, only one girl is still left, and she has been taken in by sympathetic neighbors.

You can't breathe for sheer revulsion when you keep finding the bodies of women with bamboo poles thrust up their vaginas. Even old women over 70 are constantly being raped.

I send a letter to Mr. Hidaka asking him to put in writing his promise that the refugees will not be driven from the Zone by force, and at the same time I encourage him to discuss the matter once again with the Japanese military authorities.

*Report from the China Press in Shanghai,
25 January (Excerpt)*

Claiming that many Chinese army officers and other ranks were seeking refuge in the International Safety Zone established in Nanking following the evacuation of the capital by Chinese troops, Colonel Nagai, army spokesman, announced the report of the Nipponese gendarmerie in Nanking at yesterday's press conference. . . .

It was ascertained, the report claimed, that high officers of the Chinese army were hiding in buildings, foreign embassies and legations after these buildings were evacuated by their staffs. Up to December 28, it said, 23 Chinese officers, 54 non-commissioned officers, and 1,498 privates were seized by the Japanese in the various buildings in the zone. Among them, it was claimed, was the commander of the Nanking peace preservation corps, Wang Hsianglao, "who masqueraded as Chen Mi" and was in command of the fourth branch detachment of the International Safety Zone, Lieutenant General Ma Poushang, former adjutant of the 88th Division, and a high official of the Nanking police, Mi Shinshi.

General Ma, it is claimed, was active in instigating anti-Japanese disorders within the zone, which also sheltered Captain Huan An and 17

rifles, while the report states that Wang Hsianglao and three former subordinates were engaged in looting, intimidating and raping.

In dugouts adjoining foreign embassy and legation quarters evacuated by their staffs, were found caches of arms. A search in one dugout disclosed:

- one light artillery gun
- 21 machine guns of Czechoslovakian manufacture with 60 rounds
- three other machine guns
- 10 water-cooled machine guns with 3,000 rounds
- 50 rifles with 420,000 rounds of ammunition
- 7,000 hand grenades
- 2,000 trench mortars shells
- 500 artillery shells

When asked to specify the embassy adjoining the dugout, the spokesman said that that he did not feel he was at liberty to do so. He also evaded a question as to whether anybody was found in the United States legation. Although no official information was available, the spokesman continued, he understood that a number of Chinese army men arrested were executed on charges of looting. When asked whether prisoners would be regarded as prisoners of war or spies, he answered that this was entirely dependent on the circumstances under which they were arrested.

L A T E R

Dr. Günther's report, passed on to us by Herr Sindberg of the Kiangnan Cement Factory, proves that it is not just Nanking that is suffering at the hands of the Japanese soldiery. The same reports are coming in from all sides about rapes, murder, and mayhem. One might be led to think that the entire criminal population of Japan is in uniform here.

If Dr. Rosen's confidential reports are to be taken seriously, my collection of medals will increase by one very soon, that is, I've been nominated for a German Red Cross medal. Since Kröger and Sperling have been also been similarly threatened, I'll quietly let it all burst over my head.⁴⁷

4 F E B R U A R Y

I've got to do guard duty today, meaning, I'll have to keep an eye on my own refugee camp, the German school behind my garden with its 600 refugees, and the Middle School with its 5,000. I won't be able to accomplish much if the Japanese force their way in, but at least I can be there and watch the whole thing so that the world can be told about it.

LATER

4 February, which we so feared, is now behind us. Everything was quiet. As regards the Japanese, we were not disturbed. Today is the last day of Chinese New Year. Despite snow and rain, the Chinese are setting off fireworks in the garden and are in a good mood. It's extraordinary how these poor people are so easily satisfied with so little. As long as someone's not trying to kill them, they are content.

Mr. George Fitch showed up on Shanghai Radio yesterday, very much a friend of Japan again. If he knew that between 28 and 31 January there were more rapes, etc. here than in the worst days of December, he might well have spoken otherwise. I have still received no word from Mutti whether my diaries arrived safely in Shanghai. Nor is there any word from the firm about whether they agree with my staying on here until the beginning of March.

5 FEBRUARY

We have 98 more cases of rape to report for 3 February. We have not been harassed here in the camps, thank God; but the enclosed letter of the Chinese director of the Middle School camp, where the number of refugees has climbed from 5,000 to 8,000, speaks volumes:

Letter from the University of Nanking, Middle School, to Rabe

Nanking, 5 February 1938

Dear Dr. Rabe:

Beg to report that there are more refugees coming back to our school for save. They said that they cannot live at home, for day and night the Japs broke in to find girls. They will kill you if you didn't find girls for them. How can they go back under such conditions. Please save these refugees with Christian idea.

Except your friends we have no place to ask save. Will you please consider the matter with the German Embassy and the American Embassy and the Japanese Embassy. They cried to me, but I have no way to save them.

The self-government absolutely has no power to stop them to go in during the day and night. They said no protection except international committee. Now even the wife and the woman servant of the officers of

the self-government, they rape as same as the common people. I do not know why they ask the refugees to go back home under such bad and evil conditions.

They can't do that if there is no protection.

How pitiful these refugees are.

I pray God to bless China and save us as soon as possible. Now we are standing in the fire cave, and if you and you friend do not save us, how can we be saved? Please consider with you friend to find any way to save us with love.

My dear teacher. I write this letter with hearty tears. Be God always with you. Please remember us always in your prayers.

With best wishes I remain very truly yours,
D. G. GRIMES

2:15 P. M.

Chinese pilots are once again drifting through the skies over Nanking; at least the planes carry the Chinese insignia: You can't be certain what nationality the pilots are. Let's hope they aren't Russians, otherwise we won't be all that well-protected under our swastika!

According to the latest reports, the Japanese now want the refugee camps disbanded by 8 February. We move from one state of uproar to another. Thus far about a third of the total number of refugees have emigrated from the Zone, the rest, mainly women and girls, refuse to leave. Today we heard from the doctors at Kulou Hospital that two cases of beriberi have been admitted. Given a diet of nothing but rice, it's no wonder. We have telegraphed to Shanghai for medicine.

We few Germans are quite downcast by the radio report that Blomberg, Fritsch, and various other generals at home have resigned or been removed. Ostensibly it has to do with our foreign policy. We're expectantly waiting for more details. That's all we needed in the midst of this misery here: worrying about peace at home!

Letter from Christian Kröger, Shanghai, to John Rabe

Shanghai, 28 January 1938

Dear Master Rabe,

I am slowly becoming human again, after first warming myself with various grogs in the wake of a rather arduous train trip, nor should I forget

to mention a hot bath, and then a week of being able to move about among people who are properly dressed and peaceable, rather than among those beasts of prey in Nanking.

The trip was indeed a mad one, and I must say that my heart was in my throat when I saw the open railway car at the train station. My ridiculous policeman is to blame for that, and I could have boarded the horse car there and then, which I later did in Chinkiang. With a few cigarettes I made it clear to the soldier there that it was my preferred mode of transport, and that worked, despite the protests of my police officer. Luckily he froze even worse than I, and so reason triumphed over a stupid order.

As far as Changchow (Wuchin), it's a devastated and crazy landscape, then all at once things get better, farmers are out in their fields and are already plowing. Apparently mopping-up operations have been completed that far. But there's definitely been the same sort of looting everywhere; because during the whole trip soldiers would board with their heavy bundles, and officers even had soldiers carrying their booty for them. Otherwise there's not much to see. The highway is indeed not quite secure, especially not at night. All the same I would have ten times preferred driving my own car.

I had not seen your dear *taitai*⁴⁸ until today. She is very worried, and I'm sure the right thing is for you to show up here in a month at the latest and then leave for Germany. I had a long conversation with Dr. Probst. He's interested in everything. They don't need you to do business, I don't think, but they do want to relieve you and send you home on a vacation that you more than richly deserve. They want to send someone in your place, but I think that's pointless, because no one could really settle in there and there's no business to be done anytime soon. So, see to it that you first get rid of your refugees. The Chinese love to fall to their knees and be protected. But at some point they'll have to take the fresh air, and I think a little consideration for your *taitai* and your own health take precedence here.

One more suggestion. There's a Krupp diesel at my *hong*. Carlowitz & Co. can indeed claim it as theirs, but there'll be no one there who knows how to deal with a diesel. Hatz wanted to drive the car to Shanghai in any case. See to it that you gradually get your things packed up and then have Hatz drive you to Shanghai in it. Surely that will be possible by the middle of March. Let your generous heart take courage, and think of your *taitai*, who otherwise is going to board a Japanese troop train and pay you a visit there. I think she is taking care of pretty much everything for you.