

## NOTES

### FROM JOHN RABE'S NANKING AND BERLIN DIARIES

1. Hapro—*Handelsgesellschaft für industrielle Produkte* [trading company for industrial products] was the cover name for a firm that secretly delivered weapons to the Chinese army. The firm was originally answerable to the War Ministry in Berlin, later to Göring.

2. "Tummy-not-good," i.e., diarrhea.

3. A suburb of Nanking that served as its port on the Yangtze.

4. This remark by someone on the embassy staff refers to a directive from Hitler. The German embassy in Nanking had telegraphed the Foreign Ministry, asking whether, for their own protection, Jews of German nationality who lived outside international concessions (as for instance in Tientsin or Shanghai) were permitted to display the Reich flag with swastika. This suggestion had originally come from the Japanese general consul in Tientsin. In an express letter to the Reich Interior Ministry dated 9 September 1937, Legation Councilor Hinrich, an official of the Foreign Ministry, noted that he was aware that "in general there should be only a limited extension of protective measures to Jews living abroad." But then he added that conditions in China were quite different. "In practice, then, we are left with no other means by which to make the property of German nationals of Jewish blood recognizable than by displaying the German flag." Moreover, this was not in any way a "display of the flag in a legal sense." And it was the view of the legal department for overseas organizations—in effect, of the NSDAP—that there was no problem with displaying the flag of the German Reich as a way to make Jewish property recognizable. Herr Hinrich requested a reply by return mail. The deputy state secretary of the Reich Interior Ministry responded that he, too, had no objection; but just to con-

form with regulations, he suggested that the matter be "submitted to the Führer and Reich Chancellor for decision." The director and state secretary of the Reich Chancery passed on Hitler's answer on 4 October:

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has decided against granting German nationals of the Jewish race permission either to display our national flag because of the warlike confusions in China or to make themselves recognizable by the wearing of armbands of a similar nature. It is the Führer's view that German nationals of the Jewish race can protect themselves and are adequately marked by displaying white flags or armbands, on which, if necessary, their association with the Reich can be indicated in German or some foreign language.

This trail of letters shows that officials at the Foreign Ministry and even the Reich Interior Ministry were less rigorous in their treatment of "German nationals of Jewish blood" than was the Führer and Reich Chancellor. A telegram reflecting Hitler's directive was then sent to the embassy in Nanking (Federal Archives, Berlin, R 43 II/1286).

5. Rabe's son.
6. The reference is to the widespread sympathy among intellectuals for Mao's cause.
7. Rabe's daughter and son-in-law, who had returned to Germany.
8. Horse-drawn wagon.
9. Dr. Horst Baerensprung, the former police chief of Magdeburg and a Social Democrat. Emigrating to China in 1933, he first became an advisor to the Police Academy in Nanking and then in 1937, an advisor to the military police at the headquarters of Marshal Chiang Kai-shek.
10. Taken from Wolf Schenke, *Reise an der Gelben Front: Beobachtungen eines deutschen Kriegsbereiterstatters* [Journey to the Yellow Front: Observations of a German War Reporter] (Oldenburg and Berlin, 1943), pp. 60 ff. (excerpt).
11. The code dictionary of the Foreign Service, in which every German word was replaced with a five-digit number. It offered no top-secret protection and was therefore not used for confidential telegrams.
12. *Curio* was a term used by old China hands for Chinese works of art, which most of them did not especially value. It was not until about one hundred years ago that Westerners discovered Chinese art and began collecting it. John Rabe owned a small collection.
13. A high ministerial official in Chiang Kai-shek's government.
14. Ret. Lieutenant Colonel Hermann Kriebel, acting as General Ludendorff's representative, took part in Hitler's putsch attempt in 1923 and was sentenced to prison along with him. He first joined the NSDAP several years later. From 1929 to 1933, he was a German military advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, including one year during which he served as director of the advisory staff; then in 1934 he became consul general in Shanghai. Because of his pro-Chinese views, he was called back in 1937 and after an eighteen-month hiatus, became the head of personnel in the Foreign Ministry. He had long since lost any influence he once had with Hitler.
15. Read: his great-grandfather, Ignaz Moscheles.
16. He had established a Safety Zone in Nantao/Shanghai.
17. Code address: American Embassy Nanking.
18. Lautenschlager was actually legation councillor.
19. Rabe is punning on his own name here, since in German *Rabe* means "raven."

20. China had a silver coin, originally called the tael, but when it began to be minted in Mexico it became the so-called "Mexican dollar," whose value in the thirties fluctuated between 2.4 and 2.7 reichsmarks.
21. Foreign Ministry.
22. 1 tan = 133 lb.
23. From the political archives of the German Foreign Ministry, China-Japan, Pol. VIII, 28, vol. 19.
24. The Chinese Red Cross.
25. In those days, a term for lunch commonly used by foreign nationals in China and India.
26. "There are Japanese soldiers who are very bad."
27. Identification card.
28. Virgins.
29. Little children.
30. "The hundred old family names"—an affectionate term for the Chinese people as a whole.
31. Policemen.
32. Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law, Prime Minister H. H. Kung.
33. The Chinese pronunciation of Scharffenberg.
34. On 12 December, the American river gunboat *Panay* was attacked and sunk by Japanese bombers about twenty-five miles upriver from Nanking. The incident led to a serious diplomatic confrontation between Washington and Tokyo. See pp. 71-72.
35. Rabe is confused here. He apparently means Rosen's grandfather, Georg Rosen.
36. In the Federal Archives, R 9208/4439, pp. 74-79.
37. The text reads: "Wind up business yourself and Han return Shanghai soonest."
38. Rabe's handwritten notation: "Received in Nanking 14/1/38—Rabe."
39. Firm, a firm's property or compound.
40. The official in charge of the administration of a diplomatic embassy or consulate was given the official title of "chancellor." Scharffenberg's memoranda were forwarded as his personal reports to the Foreign Ministry.
41. Germans were told, and erroneously believed, that black French troops were incited by such promises during World War I.
42. Chang Hsueliang, son of the warlord Chang Tsolin from Manchuria, had inherited his father's army and continued to lead it in northern China. In December 1936, he took Chiang Kai-shek prisoner while the latter was visiting the city of Sian but after a few very tense days released him again under pressure from Mao and Zhou Enlai. Chiang Kai-shek pledged that from then on he would stop fighting Mao and fight the Japanese. News that Chang Hsueliang had been shot and killed in January 1938 was not true. He was arrested in Nanking, and in 1949 Chiang Kai-shek took him with him to Taiwan, where he lived under house arrest until his death.
43. Edwin Brich Dwynger's books tell about the war on the eastern front and in the Baltic.
44. Foreign Ministry.

45. "Better dead than a slave," from "Pidder Lüng," a poem by Detlev von Liliencron (1844-1900).

46. The national group leader for China of the Overseas Department of the NSDAP, with offices in Shanghai. For a discussion of the man, see Erwin Wickert, *Mut und Übermut* [Courage and Arrogance] (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 313 ff.

47. Ambassador Trautmann had requested the Medal of Honor of the Red Cross for all three.

48. Chinese: woman of the house.

49. The official Japanese news agency.

50. The copy made in Shanghai at the request of Legation Secretary Rosen arrived in Berlin via courier on 12 April 1938, that is, three days before John Rabe's arrival. But the bureaucrats at the Foreign Ministry were apparently bewildered by the idea of purchasing a copy of the film. The report of the embassy in Hankow reads: "The general consulate in Shanghai advanced the sum of 60 Chinese dollars for the preparation of the aforementioned film document. This amount is recorded in Part III of the official ledger of the general consulate—not of the embassy—in Shanghai as a nonbudgeted expenditure for January/March 1938. Signed: *Trautmann*."

Apparently the purchase of a film seemed highly unusual to the accounting department. The embassy's report was therefore forwarded to political desk VIII "with the request that a decision be made whether and on what basis the costs are to be defrayed by official funds of the Foreign Ministry and whether such funds are then to be collected from some other source." Whereupon political desk VIII replied in a marginal note: "Inasmuch as, once the Europeans had evacuated from Nanking, there were as good as no foreign eyewitnesses to the atrocities attributed to the Japanese in Nanking, the acquisition by the office of the German embassy in Nanking of a film made by an American missionary and recording several such occurrences is, in this particular and exceptional instance, deemed of official interest. A showing of this film at the Propaganda Ministry (and on other closed occasions) has been planned under arrangements made by the Foreign Ministry. Respectfully resubmitted herewith to the Division Pers. R." But that in no way resolved the matter of cost. The desk in the personnel department therefore prepared a new file document, which reads:

In the case at hand it is to be recommended that the small sum of approximately 45 reichsmarks be taken from the political budget, given the political nature of this material, which, given our position vis-à-vis Japan, one would not gladly make available to a broader public; there would be some danger of that, however, were the sum to be recorded in an open account. Moreover, funds for such purposes are not available to the Pers. R desk. Herewith presented to Legation Councilor Dr. Dienstmann, respectfully requesting his approval. Berlin, 22 April 1938.

Marginal note: approved (signature).

The document was resubmitted several times, and in the end, there is this final notation: "Accounting instructions have been given. The matter of finances is settled. Respectfully returned to the East Asia political desk VIII. Pers. R., 4 June 1938 (signature unreadable)."

51. Martin Fischer, later consul general and assistant to the ambassador in Shanghai.

52. Literally "fast horse"—midwife.

53. A reference to "Hans Huckenbein, der Unglücksrabe" [Lame Jack, the bird (literally, raven) of ill omen] by Wilhelm Busch.

54. See note 30.

55. See the diary entry for 12 December 1937, p. 62.
56. The Chinese business manager of a firm. The word comes from the Portuguese.
57. Piefke was a Prussian military band conductor, who in 1864 composed the Düpeler Sturmmarsch on the occasion of Prussia's victory over the Danes. Ever since, the term "Piefke" has been a pejorative nickname for a chauvinistic Prussian.
58. Willi Schläger was the husband of Rabe's daughter Gretel.
59. A distant relative.
60. A colleague's daughter.
61. Hitler had already committed suicide in the "Führer's bunker" near the Reich Chancery on 30 April, only a few miles from Rabe's apartment in Wilmersdorf.
62. The capitulation of the entire German Wehrmacht had been signed by General Jodl in Reims, France, on 7 May. This surrender was repeated on 9 May at Soviet headquarters in Karlshorst, where among the signatories were General Keitel and Count Schwerin von Krosigk, who was still acting head of government.
63. Gretel, John Rabe's elder daughter and the wife of Willi Schläger, together with her daughters Ursula and Gudrun; Rabe's son Otto and his wife, Eva.
64. There was no armistice with Japan until 15 August 1945.
65. An early autobahn west of Berlin, also used as a race track.
66. The Chinese goddess of mercy.
67. That is, without using outside electrical current.
68. Hitler was already dead, see note 61.
69. Herr Vollbach's report is full of improbabilities.
70. Long after Rabe's death and with the help of Dr. Rosen, Rabe's daughter recovered some of these monies.
71. Chinese. "Doesn't matter."

## AFTERWORD

1. From a small manuscript that Rabe left for his grandchildren and titled *Lest We Forget*.

## DOCUMENTS

1. This means that a coded five-digit group of numbers signifying a particular word was never transmitted or was mangled in transmission and was therefore unreadable.
2. *Akten*, vol. 1, no. 528.
3. *Ibid.*, no. 529.
4. See Document 2, above.
5. *Akten*, no. 532.
6. *Ibid.*, no. 538.
7. *Ibid.*, no. 513.
8. *Ibid.*, no. 519.
9. From John Rabe's diary.
10. *Ibid.*

## II. Ibid.

12. *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Pol. VIII, Chinesisch-japanischer Konflikt, 1937-1938* [Political Archives of the Foreign Ministry, Pol. VIII, Sino-Japanese Conflict, 1937-1938] and John Rabe's diary.

13. Article of the English-language newspaper *Japan Advertiser*, Tokyo, 7 and 14 December 1937. The newspaper was owned by Americans. Quoted from H. J. Timperley, *What War Means: The Japanese Terror in China* (London, 1938).

14. Documents 18, 19, and 20 are taken from John Rabe's diary.

15. *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Pol. VIII, Chinesisch-japanischer Konflikt, 1937-1938*.