IN SEARCH OF HISTORY

A Personal Adventure

Books by
THEODORE H. WHITE

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To Beatrice

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IN SEARCH OF HISTORY

A Personal Adventure

PROLOGUE

THE STORYTELLER

Should he follow the sound of the drums?

He could hear it all beginning again: the nervous rattle of practicing drums, the shuffle that precedes the parade. The sound was almost irresistible, because in American politics it is when the parade is falling in that it is most exciting. He had followed those sounds for twenty years, across the country and back, again and again, and up with the crescendo to the conventions, on through the rallies with pretty girls in shakos and pompoms kicking in town squares and crowds yelling in big-city arenas until, suddenly on a November night, there would be a new President.

There is no excitement anywhere in the world, short of war, to match the excitement of an American Presidential campaign. He had loved that excitement and had made it his profession to be a storyteller of elections. Yet as summer faded in 1975 and the campaign for the Presidency reached speed, the more stories he gathered, the more confused he became.

Was there more to learn in one more story of the making of a President? There *was* something new in what Americans sought as they passed on their power—but how to define it? The excitement of the campaign was still there, but not the clarity that once gave the pattern of history to his stories.

Nor was there ever more than momentary escape from this confusion, behind any barricade. He would come back from his forays into the insane parade of the 1976 primaries with a sense of relief. For a few days, his office would be again, as it used to be, his cave. There were always chores at the office, and the mail to be answered—distractions he welcomed.

But now he found himself oddly irritated by the letters he used

to enjoy most—those from students of history, young or old, inquiring about some corner of the past he had witnessed: the revolution in China, the victory in Asia, the renascence of Europe, the turning of the hinges of American politics. Usually, the questioners wanted to know if he had more to say than he had reported in his public writings. They were pursuing what scholars called an "argument," and wrote to him to mine his reporter's memories and notebooks for raw material that would support those "arguments." Good reporters organize facts in "stories," but good historians organize lives and episodes in "arguments." It was a very rare learned man who would change his "argument" because of a reporter's response to his question. Yet such letters from history students were innocently accusatory, and before plunging back on the campaign trail, the storyteller would wonder whether, in his appetite for anecdote and detail, he was missing the "argument," the connection between this campaign and what was really happening in this two hundredth year of the American experiment in self-government.

As a storyteller he had always liked the lines in Archibald MacLeish's poem "Conquistador," in which Bernál Díaz, MacLeish's storyteller, is made to say: ". . . but I . . . I saw Montezúma: I saw the armies of Mexico marching, the leaning Wind in their garments: the painted faces: the plumes. . . . We were the lords of it all. . . ."

We Americans had, indeed, been lords of it all during this storyteller's time. But few serious students of history seemed to care about the sights, sounds and smells which now seemed to them irrelevancies on the trail by which America moved to its power, then disposed its power around the globe and at home. No one cared to listen about how it rained the weekend of the surrender and how drenched the Japanese must have been when the sun came out just in time for the thundering fly-by of American bombers; or how the same drought that had parched Europe in 1947 brought about not only the Marshall Plan but sugared the finest white Burgundy wines of the century; or exactly what the connection was between General Chennault's whorehouse in Kunming and the great debate between Chennault and Stilwell over the strategy of destroying Japan; or the wild and happy exultation in Boston's streets when John F. Kennedy came home in 1960, which seemed at the time like just another rally, but was not.

Strangers always ask reporters what it is "really all about." That question, now in mid campaign, began not only to irritate the storyteller, but to make him angry.

He was angry most of all with himself because for so many years he had neither paused nor dug deep enough to answer that question. Moreover, less and less frequently came those bursts of ecstasy when the hours of writing swept by like minutes, all the words flowing in paragraphs preshaped by unconscious thinking. This time his observations were outrunning his understanding. This America he was now reporting was swelling with strange, vague forms which his thinking could no longer shape into clean stories. No piling up of more reportorial facts, no teasing anecdote, no embracing concept, could hide from him what was wrong: his old ideas no longer stretched over the real world as he saw and sensed it to be.

Thus, as the campaign wore on, he found himself more and more bewildered. How had America come to this strange time in its history, and he with it? How had the old pieties and the new technologies come to this strange intermarriage in politics? He had seen most of it; reported much of it; but, by the code of reporters, had denied himself, in the name of "objectivity," the meaning of it.

The thought crept in: it was probably more useful to go back than to go on. It was just faintly possible he might learn more from what he had left out of his forty years of reporting than to go on and add more observation. What more was to be added with one more campaign swing, watching the wild mobs roar and cheer, hearing the drums beat, seeing the arc lights sweep the night sky—and reportorially wondering who had "advanced" this crowd, putting together what voting groups, to win which votes in this particular place, by what vision of how the American mosaic fits together?

To go back, however, meant that the storyteller would have to identify himself to himself before he could resume his old profession of spinning political stories in public which, he hoped, the readers could string together as history.

He had been, he now knew for certain, almost too fashionable in his reporting for too many years. He had been a mild Marxist at one time in his youth because that was the fashion of his generation. He had become entranced by power and force during the war years in Asia. Had become convinced of American virtue during the years of reconstruction in Europe. And then had come home to American politics and begun to see it as an adventure in which men sought their identity. If men made history, he would seek them out. This thought had lasted for years, as popular fashion went at the time—

the thought that leadership is a quest of men seeking to find themselves and that in so seeking, they shape the lives of other people.

Though he could not give up that old thought entirely, he knew it was insufficient to explain politics. Identities in politics, he now realized, were connected far more to ideas than to ego, to id, or to glands. At the core of every great political identity lay an idea—an idea imposed on the leader from his past, which the leader absorbed, changed and then imposed on the others outside. It was with some amazement that the storyteller realized that this simple thought was exactly where he had begun as Theodore H. White back in Boston many years ago, learning about ideas. He had discarded those boyhood teachings very early. He had later learned that money counted. That guns counted. That power counted. But the idea that *ideas* counted, that ideas were the beginning of all politics, was now, when he was sixty, pressing his thinking back to his adolescence. The men he had since reported in politics were all of them the vessels of ideas. The armies, the navies, the budgets, the campaign organizations they commanded flowed from the ideas that shaped them, or the ideas they could transmit and enforce. Whether it was Mao and Chou, or Nixon and Haldeman, or Kennedy and McNamara, or de Gaulle and Monnet, their identities came from the ideas that had been pumped into them, the ideas they chose in turn to pump out. Their cruelties and nobilities, their creations and tragedies, flowed far more certainly from what was in their minds than from what was in their glands.

You could separate people out into the large and the small, he thought, by whether their identities came from their own ideas or from the ideas of others. Most ordinary people lived their lives in boxes, as bees did in cells. It did not matter how the boxes were labeled: President, Vice President, Executive Vice President, Chairman of the Board, Chief Executive Officer, shop steward, union member, schoolteacher, policeman, "butcher, baker, beggarman, thief, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief," the box shaped their identity. But the box was an idea. Sir Robert Peel had put London policemen on patrol one hundred fifty years ago and the "bobbies" in London or the "cops" in New York now lived in the box invented by Sir Robert Peel. The Sterling Professor at Yale and all the great physicists at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, England, alike lived in a box, labeled by someone else's idea. When a pilot awoke in the morning, he could go to the air strip feeling that he was

the hottest pilot in the whole air force—but he was only a creature of Billy Mitchell's idea. And even if he was the bravest astronaut in outer space, he was still a descendant in identity from Robert Hutchings Goddard's idea of rocketry.

All ordinary people below the eye level of public recognition were either captives or descendants of ideas. When they went out to work in the morning, they knew what they were supposed to do in the office, in the store, at the bench, on the line. They did their jobs either competently, or happily, or grimly. Sometimes they hated the man above or below them; more normally the attraction of the job, whether in a coal mine or in a newspaper city room, was not so much the money as the comradeship. Yet what a man did was what he was, and what you did, whether you knew it or not, fell to you from other men's ideas. Only a very, very rich man, or a farmer, could escape from this system of boxes. The very rich could escape because wealth itself shelters or buys identity. The very, very rich could become the greatest collectors of Picassos, Tang horses, rare books, stamps, stables, needlepoint, old coins or, simply, girls. They could exempt themselves from reality. And farmers, too, could escape from other men's ideas: A farmer made his own life in the fields; the weather, the market, the quality of his labor and devotion, connected him to another, primitive human condition which was not disturbed by ideas. Or—perhaps?—not even a farmer could escape. After all, at the time White was born, more than half of all Americans lived in villages or tilled the fields. And now only four percent worked the land. Some set of ideas—was it Justin Morrill's? or Mordecai Ezekiel's? or the Agricultural Adjustment Act?—must have had something to do with the dwindling of their numbers.

Thus, then, in the pauses between campaign rounds he began to ask himself: Whose idea was he? What was the label on the box that marked his trade?

The answer was not at all simple. The storyteller knew he was a trafficker in an undefinable trade, a popularizer of personalities, causes, revolutions, battles, campaigns; half public clerk, half private courtier. He told his stories, as troubadours had offered their songs, for attention, applause and a fee. But now, in the adventure of 1976, he no longer knew how to string the stories together in any way that connected them with history. He could read the notes as well as any—but the rhythm escaped him. For forty years, he had believed that any political problem could be solved with enough money, enough good will, enough common sense—and a dash of courage.

But now, in the campaign of 1976, he could sense contradictions developing that completely upset such thinking. He could no longer fit his stories into the old patterns, nor himself into the old box labeled "reporter." Moreover, he was uncomfortable in the shelf box labeled "historian." There was this jangle between the ideas he wanted to believe and the contrary ideas his reporting forced on him.

To explain his confusion, it was necessary to go back to the beginning. There, even at the beginning, was the clash of ideas.

The beginning lay in Boston, and his awareness of the Depression, and the sense of terror and fright that politics had let into his house and family, and the nights he listened in the little bedroom off the kitchen when his parents talked and thought he was asleep.

The first memory was of the sound of his mother crying late one night, crying to his father because there was no money to buy shoes for the children, who had to go back to school. Then his father came to bed; his father slept with him in the same bed, the two little brothers on another narrow bed in the same room, his mother sleeping with his sister in the other bedroom. That night his father did not sleep at all; he could feel his father twisting and turning and tossing in the bed, while he tried to make his father believe he was unaware.

The family was alone there in Boston. Except as a statistic, or to each other, they did not exist. He would always agree with the sociologues who said that the worst thing about a depression is not the hunger but the erasure of poor men's identities. The poor had no jobs; they were useless bodies; they fit nowhere; but worst of all, they were negatives in their own eyes, for they could not protect their own; as his father could not.

When his father died during the Depression, White was sixteen, and it was up to him, then, to protect his mother, sister and brothers. It was a sadness to him many years later, when his books won an audience, that his father, a compulsive reader, could not see them in bookstore windows. He had loved his father, and yet been resentful of him, for his father had thought of this son only as a "tough" kid, a child being swept into the rough culture of the streets, a culture that repelled the father. It was good, though, that he had been toughened, for his story began there on the streets. When a system breaks down, history always throws the breakage into the streets. It was there he found his first job.

It was a ten-hour-a-day job selling newspapers on the trolleys. Ten hours meant ten hours—from five in the morning until three in the afternoon, with no time off for lunch. He used to hop the streetcar, yell the headlines, squeeze through the crowded standees and then, if the motorman was friendly and slowed the car to reasonable jumping speed, he hopped out of the moving trolley and raced back to the corner to catch the next one—caught it, hopped out, ran back, caught another, and thus the treadmill all day long. It was good for the lungs and for learning.

The corner was "owned" by a rather friendly roughneck who "owned" many corners, and also "owned" the metal arm badges that the streetcar company gave out to newsboys or their bosses; the badge was the license that let its owner sell papers on streetcars. The boy had no right either to the corner or to the badge; that belonged to the boss. But at the time, he was grateful to the boss.

What he learned was important. He did not know then that he was in the news system, in the process. He was a newsboy, an old-fashioned newsboy. For each one hundred papers, sold at two cents each, two dollars came in—of which he could keep seventy cents for himself. When he took over the corner, it sold about three hundred newspapers a day; when he left, a year and a half later, the corner sold four hundred newspapers a day, and sometimes even five hundred, if he was smart enough to grab attention—or if history grabbed the headlines. That was the very beginning of learning—when to fake it with a yodeled subhead, and when to let history dictate the yell.

The yodel in Boston for newsboys on the streetcars always began: "*Globe, Post, Herald* and *Record* here! *Globe, Post, Herald* and *Record* here! Papers?" After that chant followed the "sell." The "sell" was of the newsboy's imagination. It is very cold in Boston at five o'clock of a winter morning, and he would stand over the trolley motorman's electric heater reading the paper for a good "sell" headline. A perfect one would be something from the headlines of the lurid Boston *American,* one of the worst Hearst newspapers of the day. One afternoon the *American* did a story on abortion and the newsboy could yodel: "Oh, read all about it, read all about it! Twenty-seven babies' bodies found pickled in a barrel in East Boston! Twenty-seven babies pickled in one barrel! " That sold. But from the world outside, the "they" of history could do even better for the young newsboy. When in the bitter cold of 1933, the American economy collapsed, "they" intervened—or Roosevelt did.

The yodel that morning ran: "Oh, read all about it, read all about it! Roosevelt closes the banks! All the banks are closed! Read all about it! "

The closing of the banks sold more papers than the pickled babies in the barrel. History, thus, was very important. The repeal of Prohibition brought an extra two dollars in newspapers sold that day, almost as much as the bank closing. What "they" were doing was obviously important, and he wanted to be "in on it"; and he got there by accident. He was granted a scholarship by a local college in Boston; and the boss who "owned" him and the corner agreed that he ought to take the scholarship, give up the corner and go on to college.

Now, in 1976, more than forty years later, he had been so long a part of the transmission system of news—of images, personalities, ideas—was so trained in packaging events as "stories," so convinced that if he caught the event right, he caught history right, that it was hard to go back to the boy who so suddenly and coarsely realized that Franklin Roosevelt and history sold newspapers.

He supposed his story should begin with that boy, who was given that scholarship to that local college. That local college happened to be Harvard, and Harvard was then at the apogee of its glory. It was there he would begin to rub the ideas of the street against the ideas of the academy. It was there he would begin to learn a trade, and his teachers would equip him to fit into an unfashionable box called "reporting." Reporters were supposed to *tell* what happened; scholars *explained* what had happened.

But, to be honest with himself, even Harvard was not the true beginning. The beginning of his search for history lay in his unabashed love of the American idea as it had been taught and passed on to him in his family. So that all the while he was trying to package the episodes of the campaign of 1976 into "events" that made a "story," the old idea of home, street and school kept intruding—the idea that America was the goal and the promise to which all mankind, including his immigrant grandfather and father, had been marching. He had followed this idea around the world. But now he knew that the old bundle of ideas made nonsense of the current story—or the ideas themselves had become nonsense.

Why this was so, what the connections were between the campaign of 1976 and the past—his past and America's past—slowly grew in his mind to be a more challenging assignment than

one more book on one more campaign. It might take one, or two, or several volumes to tell such a story. How did America get this power? How had America used it? How had the various Presidents sucked up this power to kill or to heal from what was thought to be the American "people"?

What the end of such a story might be he could not, as he began to write it, imagine. He was certain only of the beginning—and that was Boston.

PART ONE

BOSTON:
1915-1938

CHAPTER ONE

EXERCISE IN RECOLLECTION

I was born in the ghetto of Boston on May 6, 1915.

No one ever told me it was a ghetto, because the Jews who settled there, like my father and my grandfather, had left the idea of a ghetto behind in the old country.

America was the open land. Though they carried with them the baggage of a past they could not shed, a past that bound all the exploring millions of Jewish immigrants together, they hoped America would be different, and yearned that it prove so.

We were of the Boston Jews.

Each of the Jewish communities then a-borning in America was to be different, as I came to realize later when I traveled the country as a political reporter. Each Jewish community was to take on the color and quality of its host city. Chicago Jews, whether in politics or in business, were tougher, harder, more muscular than, say, Cincinnati Jews. Baltimore Jews were entirely different from Detroit Jews. Hollywood Jews were different from the Jews of university towns. Only New York had a community of Jews large enough to create a culture of its own, in which Yiddish newspapers could thrive, and Yiddish artists, poets, playwrights, actors, could develop an audience of their own; it was a culture in which Jewish employers sweated Jewish needleworkers, Jewish stonemasons built for Jewish contractors. Never, in all the history of the Jews since Titus plowed the Temple and sent them into exile, had so many Jews been gathered in one place at one time. New York's Jewry, before it dissolved into the suburbs and across the country, was unique in history—an implosion of hitherto suppressed and scattered energies and talents. The ferment of these New York Jews, as they came together from all over Europe in

one city in a strange country, generated an uncontainable dynamic of its own which helped to reshape both New York's and the nation's culture. But all the other Jewish communities in America absorbed the ideas of their host cities, took standards and values which they could neither recognize nor word from the alien culture. Such standards and values reached from the outside in, magnetizing and orienting the ghetto particles, who did not know they were being reordered or being reshaped—and nowhere was this more true than in Boston.

In such a community I was born and by such Jewish parents I was brought up. How we must have appeared to old Boston on the Hill, or how Henry Adams might have seen us, I do not know. But about the time I was born, the scholars of Harvard and MIT collaborated on a series of studies examining the ways of the newcomers who were changing the interior of old Boston. After discussing the characteristics of the Canadians (then an important immigrant group), the Boston Irish (then the established menace), the newly arriving Italians (about to become the Italian community of Sacco and Vanzetti), they allotted a few pages to the Jews—who were characterized as a group with "an abnormal hunger to acquire real estate."

Among the Jews with that abnormal hunger for real estate was my grandfather Samuel Winkeller, a glazier by apprenticeship, a storekeeper out of need, but in his own eyes a musician, a part-time cantor with a copper-toned tenor voice. However much he may have seemed an acquisitive specimen to the antiseptic scholarship of sociology, he was a real man—a dandy when he could afford the clothes; slim, slight of build, proud of his Vandyke beard; possessor of a teasing sense of humor, yet ferociously Orthodox. He was also, all his life, stone poor; and his pride was the wooden-frame house on Erie Street, Dorchester, that he had bought in 1912 for $2,000. It was probably the first home, the first piece of land, owned by any one of his family, for in their centuries of East European life, most Jews were either forbidden to buy land or too frightened to do so. He loved that house. It had two floors and eight rooms. He, his wife and my unmarried uncle, Naman, lived on the top floor. On the ground floor lived his daughter (my mother), her husband (my father) and the children he expected them to bring forth.

There, in my mother's bedroom, in that house, I was born—home delivered by Dr. Knowlton, for a fee of twenty-five dollars. So my father's writing in the family Bible records. Jews had not yet become doctors in those days in Boston, and Dr. Knowlton, whom I remember from childhood illnesses, was a tart and twinkling no-nonsense Yankee

who made visits to the houses of the poor in the ghetto.

That house rests at the beginning of memory.

The house on Erie Street is now a shanty deep in the troubled black ghetto of Boston. But it was, in my childhood, and in retrospect, beautiful: it still stood then as the fleeing Yankees had left it.

There is an ethnic ballet, slow yet certain, in every big American city that I have reported, which underlies its politics. The ballet is different in each city. In the larger cosmopolitan cities of the Eastern Seaboard, old-stock Protestants gave way to the Irish, who gave way in turn to Italians or Jews, who gave way in turn to blacks. Chicago's lower six wards also passed from Irish to Jewish to black, the old Jewish synagogues, still engraved with the commandments in Hebrew, converted to black churches. So, too, did Harlem pass from Irish to Jewish to black. In Los Angeles, Boyle Heights became Jewish, then Mexican American. In the Midwest and along the Great Lakes, the ethnic ballet involves other groups—Poles, Slavs, Germans, Scandinavians. But in Boston, specifically, the Jews leapfrogged the Irish, moving from the West End of the core city to Dorchester, which the old-stock Protestants were leaving for the southern suburbs.

The house on Erie Street thus connected me, unknowingly, directly to the New England past. It might have been gardened by John Greenleaf Whittier, and its yard was the most beautiful on the block. All the New England flowers about which I read in school, in the poems of Longfellow, and Whittier, and Emerson, and in the stories of Thornton Burgess, grew in my own back yard. Under the lilac bushes grew lily of the valley; we continued to replant the tiger lilies and tulips until we became too poor even to buy tulip bulbs. Out of the parlor window we could see the peonies that Amy Lowell wrote about, and across a little green space, the flowering almond my mother loved so much. Honeysuckle and daisies, petunias, phlox and pansy beds alternated; marigolds and hollyhocks grew in summer, dahlias in fall. To the two original fruit trees—a pear and a cherry—my grandmother added a peach tree and a grapevine.

The grapevine had a special significance. Prohibition had been written into the law—but that was *their* law. My grandmother and grandfather needed wine for the Sabbath ceremonies and the Jewish holidays. So they made their own, with their own grapes and cherries—huge jugs of wine, stored in the cellar. And as a boy, I would sneak with my friends into the cellar and sample the fermenting wine before it was decanted for real drinking the next fall. Every family on the street had its cache of wine, homemade or smuggled in, for the law

of the land was secondary to the command of custom. My grandparents were very patriotic immigrants—but Prohibition or its observance was not included in patriotism.

The house had one other connection to the old New England, beyond the flowers of its garden. Upstairs, in the attic, the original family had abandoned a treasure trove of left-behinds—brass bedsteads, stained-glass lamps, old *Scribner's* Magazines and *National Geographics*, and stocks of discarded books. Of these books, my favorite, which I preferred to the serious books in my father's library, was an old copy of *Blue Jackets of '63*. It was an account of the U.S. Navy's war against the Rebels in 1863, obviously part of a series, of which the other volumes were missing, but certainly published for the veteran audience shortly after the Civil War. I became a staunch Union man long before I was taught the Civil War in the sixth grade. "We" had freed the slaves. Upstairs, I met Admiral Farragut and General Grant. Downstairs, on the street, I was Jewish.

In that house and on that street, modern times came to us. When I was a child, milk was delivered in winter by horse-drawn sleigh, and you could hear the horses' bells in the morning before you woke. When there was a fire, huge fire horses pounded down the street pulling "Hook and Ladder," "Smokey," "Pipe and Hose." Erie Street was lit by gas; and a real lamplighter passed before our house each dusk just exactly as did Leerie the Lamplighter in the Robert Louis Stevenson poem my mother read to us. Life changed as I watched it, miracle following miracle. We began with one coal stove in the cellar, which I had to learn to stoke for house heating; there were also two kitchen stoves, on which my mother and my grandmother cooked over wood and nut coal—and then fuel oil arrived. The house was lit by gas, and I can remember both the delicate touch required to replace a fragile gas mantle in the ceiling light—and the year that electricity was strung into our house! With electricity, we were wired into a new world, for electricity brought the radio. One of our richer cousins gave us a radio—a crystal set—because he was buying one of those new radios with tubes. With enough ingenuity, one could tickle the crystal with a cat's whisker and pick up anything. In that year, 1927, I could listen to the Yankees win the World Series, hear the Sharkey-Dempsey fight from New York and even the prayer for Lindbergh's flight to Paris. As the telephone became general, the phone company sent instructors to the schools to teach children of immigrant parents how to use the dial, so that the children could, in turn, teach their parents. With radio, and telephone, and electric lights, the world changed and ideas began to creep into boyhood.

The ideas descended in streams.

They flowed first from the family, but even within the family they clashed.

My father, David White, called himself a Socialist. He was proud that in 1911 he was one of the handful of men who had marched on the Boston Common at the head of a parade of suffragettes demanding the vote for women. He kept us up in vigil all the summer night in 1927 when Sacco and Vanzetti were executed so that my sister and I, the two older children, would never forget what capitalism did to workingmen. He would walk with us on weekends and explain the world. I recall one particular Sunday afternoon when I was 12—I had been leafing through the old *Literary Digest*, where I had seen a cartoon of a squint-eyed giant bound to the ground by ropes, slowly heaving himself erect, the ropes snapping. It looked like a picture of Gulliver snapping the strings of the Lilliputians in our children's copy of *Gulliver's Travels*. I asked my father to explain and he told me about China; there was a revolution going on there and when it succeeded, as he said it must, all of us would have to pay attention to it. The only Chinese I had ever seen was the Chinese laundryman on Erie Street, whom we taunted, as all children did, with the call of "Chinkee, Chinkee Chinaman." But my father said we should not do that; we must respect Chinese: they were fighting imperialism.

However vigorous a radical my father may have been in his youth, when I came to know him he was as melancholy a man as I have ever met. Short, stout, bald, with beautiful brown eyes and a deep, resonant bass singing voice, he must once have been a man of enormous physical vigor; he could bend nails with his fingers, had the chest and forearms of a steelworker, but thought of himself as a scholar; yet his spirit was already burned out when I was growing up. He had been born to a family of rabbis in a chain that claimed descent from the Baal Shem-Tov, founder of the Chasidim; his own father, Reb Todros, left Russia and ended his days in devotions, praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. We were told he had been heartbroken that his American son, David, having snapped the long chain of rabbis in our family, had gone on to become a godless Socialist.

But long before Reb Todros made his pilgrimage to the Holy Land my own father had left for his Promised Land—at sixteen a runaway from home, arriving in Boston from Pinsk in January 1891, one among the wave of Russian-Jewish migrants set in motion nine years earlier by the brutal anti-Semitic decrees of Czar Alexander III. Whether he was missed at home was questionable. Reb Todros had

twelve daughters and five sons, my father being the youngest. His mother died in childbirth.

Whatever iridescence the American dream may have held for David White before he arrived soon faded. In Boston he had neither family nor home, peddling from a pushcart in summer, sleeping underneath it in the street, in winter finding what work he could and sleeping where he worked. Yet somehow he had the energy to learn English; to begin free law courses at night at the YMCA; then to save enough money to pay the fees for a true law school, at Northeastern University. In 1904 he passed the bar; eight years later he married, and before long he had a family of four children to support, though he cared little about money, except to buy books. His clients were poor, and he charged them no more than they could pay; in the end, in the Depression, they could pay nothing. So there was literally no money for food, no money to pay the rent to our grandparents upstairs, no money for clothes. He had always been a kind and gentle man, but now he was tattered and forlorn, with only his pride as a scholar left. He was reduced to collecting rents in the Boston slums for landlords almost as poor as their tenants, men close to or in bankruptcy, and then even his pride, too, was broken. In 1931, suddenly, his heart failed and he was dead.

My mother, Mary Winkeller White, was at once strong and fearful. She had been born in Boston in 1890; had been moved as a child to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her family lived in a cellar apartment close to Harvard until the rocks thrown through the windows by the local Irish had driven the family back to storekeeping in the safe Jewish West End. Of Sam Winkeller, my maternal grandfather, I have spoken. But the dominant member of my mother's family and the dominant member of our household was our grandmother—a hard, shrill, vigorous woman of violent piety who, until she died, fifty years after her coming to this country, spoke no English. She spoke Yiddish—always in a rage, in a temper; a shrew who resented being wedded to a man who wanted to be a musician and singer, and saw her daughter married to a lawyer, a Socialist unbeliever, who spent his money on books and wrote poetry, and refused to speak Yiddish at all once he had mastered English. She was more man than any of the men around her, and she made life hell for them.

Her own background was interesting. Her village, her *shtetl,* had rested squat on a little river that marked the border between White Russia and East Prussia. Hers was one of the rare Jewish families that actually owned land and worked it; they were cattle dealers too; and

on the side, they smuggled across the border. The most important part of their smuggling traffic was other Jews, young men escaping from the anti-Semitism of the Russian Army, into which they were being drafted, and attempting to sneak into Germany, whence they could make their way to a port like Danzig or Bremen and take off for America. So, too, her family had left, to become cattle dealers in Boston. But she was still a country woman and her garden was her joy; we American grandchildren would be ashamed as she dashed out into Erie Street after a horse's fresh droppings and swept up the steaming manure to fertilize her flowers. Nothing, she felt, must be wasted—especially money. Because there was so little of it, money was obsessive with her. Perhaps from her, more than anyone else, I inherited my obsession with money—and her phrases: "A poor man is a cripple, a rich man is free"; "Only a man with money can afford to have an opinion." She believed that unless you could bank it, touch it, hold it—all other rewards were vanity.

My grandmother despised my father; and this was the curse of my mother's life. My mother had met David White at the Workmen's Circle in Boston, a Socialist clubhouse in the West End; she was nineteen years old, a volunteer waitress who served tea at two cents a glass, coffee at three cents. There she had met this handsome young lawyer, a Socialist. Finally, after several years, she introduced him to her parents and they, so proud that their daughter had met a "learned" man, a lawyer at that, agreed to the marriage; and then all of them, after the purchase of the house, moved to Dorchester on what they thought was the way up.

There the conflict began.

Upstairs was Yiddish-speaking. Downstairs, we spoke English. Upstairs, Friday night, the eve of *Shabbas* was celebrated with candles, wine and challah, the twisted white bread. Downstairs, my father sat adamant—he, the unbeliever, had come to see religion as a superstition and would have no part of its ceremonies. I was a pawn between the two families, moved by my grandmother's tyrannical will and my mother's desire to please her mother and her husband at the same time. I rather enjoyed it all; my grandmother, after shaping her own white twistbread for the evening, would bake a special small challah, the size of a bun, for me. Then I would be called upstairs for the prayers of the *Kiddush.* I would make the traditional blessing in Hebrew, and would be given a goblet of red wine. When I did especially well, or lingered to eat dinner upstairs—usually chicken and chicken soup—my grandfather, a merry man, would be delighted, and

would pour me a thimbleful of raw yellow Polish vodka. At which my grandmother would shriek that he was trying to make me a drunk, and after much shrieking and occasionally singing, I would go downstairs to my own family.

In this conflict of cultures, my mother was the pivot. Orthodox Jews in those days disdained their women; neither my mother nor my sister, a brilliant girl, was sent to Hebrew school. My mother had not even been allowed to finish public high school, but was put to work at sixteen. Near-sighted, she would never have been fitted with eyeglasses if the public-school teacher had not summoned my immigrant grandfather to school and indignantly insisted on it. Somehow, whether from this school experience or from her own children's experience, she belonged to the American system more than anyone else in the family. My father, as I say, was a Socialist; my grandparents were locked in their Jewishness; but she, American born, a favorite of her teachers, wanted to be "in"—if not "in" for herself, "in" for her children.

I did not realize for many, many years how very hungry my mother was for genteel respectability—and what she thought to be American. To the rigid underculture of Jewish Orthodoxy she added the Puritan customs of old Boston—down to the ever-handy bar of black tar soap with which she washed our mouths if we spoke a single dirty word. American holidays were to be celebrated as much as Jewish holidays, Thanksgiving with a feast and the Fourth of July with penny firecrackers. When, in 1919, the soldiers were coming home, she would stand, waving, by the railway siding that carried the doughboys from Boston's pier to the Fort Devens demobilization point. In that year, when I was four years old, she bought penny flags for my sister and myself so we, too, could wave to the "soldier boys," who waved back from the train windows and threw molasses kisses and hard candies to the children who cheered them home. She was as conservative politically as she was socially. In our home, only my father spoke of politics—and then only to underscore for us that Democrats and Republicans alike cheated the people. But my mother was a Republican. In all her life she has voted for only two Democrats—Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. She still recalls with pride her vote for Barry Goldwater, because he was a "much nicer man" than Lyndon Johnson.

What dreams may have passed through her mind, I cannot guess. In most marriages, there is usually a dominant partner and an indulgent one. In hers, there was no room either for dominance or for

indulgence. My grandmother dominated the entire household, and life and poverty indulged no one. I am sure that my mother never dreamed of dances, or balls, or silken gowns. She told me once that the only thing she ever dreamed of having when she was a little girl was a doll—but no one ever bought her a doll. So she dreamed of dolls until well into her sixties, when her own grandchildren came along and she could buy dolls for them. What she wanted of life was security, and she dreamed for her children, dreaming always of a "good job," a "government job," perhaps even a schoolteacher's job, which was the farthest limit of her ambition. She wanted no factory jobs for them, nor did she want them in "business," for the small Jewish merchants of the neighborhood were even more insecure than their customers, the workers. Her children, she insisted, would be learned people, like their father, only "safe" because they would have jobs. Thus we were thrust out to learn, and there were several systems of learning—the Hebrew school, the street school, the public school.

The decision to send me to Hebrew school, to which I trudged off at the age of eight, was the common decision of my grandmother, grandfather and mother—with my father silently resisting, and myself hopelessly protesting. My father resisted, perhaps because he once had revolted at the narrowness of the rabbinical home in which he had grown up in Pinsk, and because of the memories of the Talmudic school which his own father had taught there. My revolt was purely animal—after getting up at eight in the morning and going to public school until three-thirty, I wanted to play in the streets. I did not want to race off to another school, where I must study for two more hours in a strange language, with intense, bitter teachers who slapped when you made a mistake, lacking the easygoing qualities of the Irish teachers in the public school.

But the Beth-El Hebrew School captured me. Most of our teachers were then newly arrived young immigrant scholars, who had come from post–World War I Europe to seek a secular education in Boston's universities; they taught Hebrew in the evenings to earn their living. They were rigorous in their teaching of the young, and violent of temper when the tired children failed to respond. They despised Yiddish, a language I knew from home, for to despise Yiddish was their form of snobbery; and as a matter of principle they would speak no English in class, for their cardinal political principle was Zionism. They were about to revive the Hebrew language and make it a living tongue; after a little pampering with English in the first and second

year, as we learned the ancient alphabet and pronunciation, we were into the Bible in Hebrew—it was explained to us in Hebrew, pounded into us in Hebrew, and we were forced to explain it to one another in Hebrew.

It was a nightmare education, but I came to love it. By the time I was ten, when my father was still insisting that I should not be forced longer in this torment, and my mother was leaving it up to me to decide, and most of my friends, young street Americans like myself, were rebelling against the torture with tantrums and tears at home, I was moved up to the section that met from six to eight o'clock in the evening. I decided to go on, for the break between four and six let me do my public-school homework, and the hours of six to eight were not intolerable.

What I learned, then, from age ten to age fourteen, when I went on to evening courses at the Hebrew College of Boston, was the Bible. We learned the Bible from Genesis (Bereshith) to the Book of Chronicles, from the Book of Kings through all the Prophets, major and minor. We learned it, absorbed it, thought in it, until the ancient Hebrew became a working rhythm in the mind, until it became a second language. Its balanced cadences, its hard declarative sentences and its lacelike images structured the sentences we wrote in public-school classes.

Hebrew is a difficult language to learn, almost as difficult as Chinese; but the Old Testament in Hebrew draws one in, then clutches. Its themes and its stories are primitive—miracles; love; hate; killing; attack; sacrifice; wonder; above all, revenge! No child, however dull, can fail to be caught by the story of Joseph and the sweet revenge of Joseph when, as Pharaoh's first minister, he reveals himself to the evil brood of his brothers, holds them in his grasp, and at last relents. We were supposed to be able to hold in memory each line, each phrase, each episode. Examinations strung before us a list of quotations, asking: "Who said . . . to whom?" and we had to give book, line and episode, all in Hebrew. Some were easy, like: "I am Joseph your brother." Others were more obscure, like: "The arrow lies beyond you and farther," or "Today too many servants rise against their masters."

Memory was the foundation of learning at the Hebrew school, and the memory cut grooves on young minds that even decades cannot erase. Even now, when a Biblical phrase runs through my mind, I am trapped and annoyed unless I can convert it into Hebrew—whereupon the memory retrieves it from its proper place. The memory retrieves it

from Boston, Massachusetts, where little Jewish-American boys, pulled and tugged by stickball, hit-the-ball, baseball and jackknife, and by the movies, were forced to learn of nomads and peasants of three thousand years ago, forced to learn how shepherds watched their flocks at night, to learn of spotted lambs, of the searing summer and of the saving rains (*yohreh* and *malkosh*), without knowing that these rains were the monsoons of public-school geography. Long before the King James Bible was named supplementary reading for me in a course at Harvard, it belonged to me in my own translation; and though the Bible's English is sublime, I could, from memory, pick here and there a translation I had made my own and would not give up for theirs—as, for example, the phrase "vanity and vexation of spirit." Memory had scored that into my mind as: "all is in vain and a shepherding of the winds." The ancient Hebrew can be translated either way, but "to be a shepherd of the winds" is the way nomads must have described futility, and the way little boys in Boston, forced to study Hebrew, did translate it to themselves.

The Bible drenched me in cadence and phrase, in imagery and folklore. But it did not occur to me then, as it occurs to me now, that I was being given my first intensive seminar in history. All religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism—are, essentially, accounts of history. Religion is an effort to explain man's intrusion in time, how he got there, who put him there, for what purpose, and how that purpose worked out. All religions are embellished with stories of martyrs, teachers, sacrifices for the sacred cause. But they remain essentially stories, which explain to ordinary people their place in the now and the hereafter.

Jewish history, as I learned it in Hebrew school from the Bible and the tradition, was a very stark and perplexing history, with very unsatisfactory lessons to be learned. God had chosen the Jews; he had freed them from Egypt; when they grew stiff-necked and arrogant, again and again God would punish them. When they repented, they were saved. When they whored after false gods, they were destroyed. But it was all ancient history—fossil history. The last time God had done anything to help the Jews was two thousand years ago! And ever since then had come disaster after disaster, with the greatest of the disasters, the Holocaust, yet to come. Why? How long, O Lord?

Our stern young Zionist schoolmasters shared the same questions. Although their teaching contract with the local elders held that they must teach us tradition, prayers and the Bible, they had in their own hearts repudiated the simple historical theory of the Bible. They were

Zionists all. For them, history lay in the future, when would come the redemption of the Jews by their own efforts, in their own land, without the help of God. Even more than they despised Yiddishists, our teachers despised rabbis. Their purpose was single-minded: to get an education in America and serve the cause of Zion.

Of what they taught of Zionism I remember very little—except for one phrase, again a phrase in Hebrew, which came from Theodor Herzl. "*Im tirtsu, ayn zeh hagadah*"—"If you will it to be so, this is no legend." It is a phrase I have heard in many languages since; and I have seen men and women, students and guerrillas, in hills and streets, lashed by the thought that if you wish, you can make the dream come true. I did not share the belief that the dream of Zion would make that dream reality; but among my most cherished memories is one of a summer night in Boston. We had gone picnicking in Franklin Park, which was then safe at night; the park was moonlit and the hills soft of shape. We had read in the papers that one of the great German Zeppelins would be coursing over Boston en route to its landing in Lakehurst, New Jersey. We hated the Zeppelin because it was Hitler's and Hitler was bad for the Jews. So we talked, and strolled, and sat, and boys and girls cuddled, until, exactly on time, the Zeppelin appeared overhead, its belly light sweeping the terrain below. When we saw it coming, we gathered in a circle and danced the hora in defiance, dancing and singing until it passed from view overhead. The dream of Zion and of Israel was then so ephemeral, so unreal, that the dance was a dance of hopeless, wishful intoxication. Yet thirty years later, the idea of Zion was an army, with an armored corps, with an air force, with guns; and as an American correspondent during the 1967 Six-Day War, I flew over the desert of Sinai and stopped off now and again on the morrow of the great victory, and saw the flag of Zion flying over the Suez Canal and at Sharm al-Sheikh—the flag with the white field and the blue Star of David snapping in the wind. The idea that had reached in to touch me as a youngster in Boston had also reached out to become an army, a power, a strike force that could defend and kill.

The recognition of the force of ideas was as far away from me, growing up in Boston's streets, as the thought of man reaching into outer space—but never was there a better demonstration of the force of ideas than in the streets of Boston's ghetto. There, the American idea was steadily, remorselessly, irresistibly eroding the walls of custom and tradition that had protected the ideas of the Jews of Europe for centuries. Even in the formidable person of my grand-

mother, the old ideas could survive only as bad temper. There were never more than 110,000 Jews in Greater Boston's population of one million when I was growing up, far too small a number to generate the cultural energy which, for decades, preserved so much of the European *shtetl* culture among New York's Jews. In Boston, as in every American city, immigrants might continue to practice their religion as their fathers had, and the wives would try—at home—to preserve all the old customs, from the blessing of the candles on Sabbath eve, to the Passover Seder, to the baking of *hamantaschen* for Purim, to the decoration of the *succah* in the fall. But the men had to learn the ways of American small business to survive, the mothers had to feed their children into the suction of American schools. So there perished first the old religious orthodoxy, then the old-country customs, until finally the essence of the tradition was stripped to its naked core. And there was nothing at that core but an idea, which was as much a genetic mind set as a theology!

The old religion was, as I have said, as much history as ritual. There are almost as many different sects of Jews, who quarrel with each other, in both the new and old forms of our religion, as there are among Protestants. But if a thread ties them all together, it is the thread of the *Shma*—the incantation "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." The cantillation of this phrase was set long before the Crusades and the persecutions that scorched the Crusaders' trail; but its intonation shrieks with the agony of medieval Europe, where Jews were burned at the stake for their faith. We learned in Hebrew school that those Jews wailed the *Shma* even as the flames licked up at them; and we children argued, on our way home at night, whether it was sensible to give up your life rather than kiss a cross. Most of us admitted to cowardice; but we stood in awe of the countless forefathers who had chosen to burn rather than change their faith, and the *Shma* was the call of their courage.

The idea behind the *Shma* is the unity of all happenings; it was an idea of prehistoric shepherds who put out, in a world of idols, superstitions and numerous gods of random passions and contrary impulses, the new idea that there was but one God, who gave order to the entire universe. The mind set of all great Jewish thinkers since those shepherds has been to bind the variability of observed phenomena into one all-embracing theory. I do not believe in inherited *racial* characteristics beyond the obvious physical ones; but inherited *cultural* characteristics seem to me to be irrepressible. Thus, over the centuries, those Jewish thinkers who have moved out and been

accepted in the larger world stage have been bearers of some one seductive all-embracing theory which is as unifying as the *Shma*. At its spectacular best, this mind set yields Einstein's unified-field theory, stretching from microcosm to macrocosm, binding energy to matter by irrefutable laws, substituting $E=mc^2$ for the *Shma*. At its most humanly compelling, the mind set produces a Christ, who replaces the tribal vengeance of the Old Testament with a theory of mercy and universal brotherhood that embraces every tongue, sex, skin color, and strange custom. Whether it is the all-embracing economic and dialectic theory of Marx, or the patterning of sex, ego and the repressions of modern man as in Freud's world, the passion of Jewish thinkers for a single, universal theory in every field of knowledge or behavior has been persistent, creative—and frequently subversive to settled establishments and order throughout Western history.

Boston's Jews have no place at all in the grand history of Western thought. But their community was a good specimen for thinkers to examine. History had delivered to them two equally compelling but hopelessly irreconcilable ideas. The community in Eastern Europe from which my grandparents had come believed that only God could save. As they suffered in the ghettos, waiting for redemption and the Messiah, all they could do was pray to God to hasten the day of deliverance. God had his own grand design for all. But as news of America spread, the unsettling idea took hold that a man could save himself by his own efforts. The confusion that resulted was overwhelming; and you could see the confusion in the street school of Boston, where I learned so much. In Hebrew school, I learned about the God of the Jews. In the street school, other Jews were learning the American "hustle"; and I was part of both.

Erie Street was my street school. It was then a bustling market street, ancillary to the main shopping artery of Dorchester—Blue Hill Avenue. Storekeepers had transformed Erie Street from the quiet residential neighborhood my grandparents had sought as Jewish pioneers in the district into a semipermanent bazaar. Whatever you wanted you could buy on Erie Street. Or else someone could get it for you. Herrings were stacked in barrels outside the fish stores, and flies buzzed over the herrings. Fresh-caught fish lay on slabs, and little boys were allowed to keep the fishhooks for the trouble of extracting them. All butcher shops were kosher, sawdust on the floor, chopping blocks scrubbed clean every day, unplucked chickens piled in flop heaps in the store window, from which housewives squeezed and prodded, then picked and chose. There were four grocery stores, several dry-goods

stores, fruit and vegetable specialists, hardware stores, mama-papa variety stores, penny candy stores.

But it was the peddlers who gave the street its sound and motion. The banana man was Italian, but all other peddlers were Jewish. Early in the morning, the peddlers would go to their stables, hitch up their horses, and proceed to Faneuil Hall or the Fish Pier to bring back the day's glut in the city market. Then, leading their horse-and-wagons through Erie Street, they would yodel and chant their wares. For each peddler another chant: the fish man would sing in a special voice, "*Lebediker fisch, weiber, lebediker fisch*"; the secondhand-clothes merchant would chant otherwise; the Italian banana man would chorus only "Bananas, bananas, bananas," hawking a fruit previously unknown to Eastern Europeans.

Saturday night was the night of the fair. Friday was normally payday for the garment- and shoeworkers of the district, and Saturday was *Shabbas*. Thus Saturday night, when Sabbath was over, became shopping night—wives dragging their husbands after them, children skipping about the crowded corners, the women greeting each other, sharing gossip, the fathers stolidly enjoying themselves, the peddlers yelling their wares. Summer was best: the peddlers would bring in strange delights they had found in the Faneuil Hall produce market, and Jews could see for perhaps the first time wagons of watermelons (twenty-five cents each), pineapple wagons, grape wagons, as well as wagons full of rejected or factory-surplus socks, shirts, undergarments. I grew up with such weekly fairs, and later, reporting both China and France, I found their weekly fairs spoke of home.

I tried my hand at the peddling business. One summer I sold ice cream. For several winters, with my across-the-street friend Butsy Schneiderman, I peddled tin horns at New Year's Eve. Another entire summer Butsy and I sold stuffed dates from door to door in Quincy and Wollaston, of which venture I remember two things: the Quincy police drove us out, for they did not want adolescent Jewish peddlers in the neighborhood; and the best quick ice cream and hot dogs in the neighborhood came from a small counter stand run by a Swede named Howard Johnson. Howard Johnson's stores later expanded across the nation. But so did one of the local grocery stores on Erie Street, Rabinowitz's, which later grew into a chain of supermarkets now listed on the New York Stock Exchange. And Sammy Rosenzweig, my classmate who had a job as a soda fountain clerk in one of Erie Street's drugstores, later made his own drugstore chain the largest in New England.

But this out-migration into the larger community was all to come

later. Erie Street was the hub of a self-contained neighborhood, and it was a safe street. The mothers all watched each other's children. No one was ever struck or mugged or threatened, even late at night; and "late at night" meant ten o'clock on weekdays, eleven o'clock on Saturdays.

Within the boundaries of our community we were entirely safe and sheltered. But the boundaries were real. We were an enclave surrounded by Irish. To the south of us, across the railway tracks, lived very tough Irish—working-class Irish. The local library lay in such an Irish district, and my first fights happened en route to the library, to get books. Pure hellishness divided us, but after one last bloody-nose battle, I was given safe passage by the Irish boys whenever I went to the library. Across Franklin Park to the west lay the lands of the lace-curtain Irish, who lived in Jamaica Plain and Roslindale; they were, if not friendly, at least not pugnacious. South of Mattapan Square there were the original settlers, Protestants—and Protestants were not dangerous at all; they did not beat you. You could hitchhike all the way to Quincy or Milton or the great Blue Hill, and if you did not bother them, Protestants would not molest you. From my uncle, who worked in the produce market at Faneuil Square, I learned that "Taleners" (Italians) were easy to get along with, too, and would not bother you if you made friends with them. There was a tiny pocket of black people in the South End, but they were curiosities and one had to be kind to them. Beyond lay terra incognita—"*Hic Sunt Leones*" ("Here Dwell Lions")—but I did not care.

Long before ethnicity became a fashionable political concept, we knew about ethnics, about each group living in its own community. But we were also all Americans, and even where the friction between the groups was greatest—in my neighborhood, along its borders with the tough Irish—it was not intolerable. Our house sat on that border; our yard backed against the yards of Irish families on the next street, a line of fence dividing them. In the house across the fence from ours lived a boy my age, Johnny Powers, whom I had always considered my enemy.

But the day my father died I climbed over the fence to call Johnny to come out—and he came out, bristling. I explained that my father had died that morning, and asked him if he could keep the kids in his street quiet for the rest of the day. Johnny instantly agreed. Not to worry, he said; he'd make sure there wouldn't be a sound from his block. He'd take care of his gang. And he did.

Politically, we were an ethnic enclave in the Irish principalities of

Boston politics. Our local district leader, a Mr. Goretsky, was a man who claimed to know Martin Lomasney; and everyone knew that Martin Lomasney was close to Mayor Curley. We voted, even my father, the Socialist, as did the Irish—a straight Democratic ticket. Only my mother, the Republican, voted otherwise, and she told no one. And the Jews of Ward Fourteen all voted! I read, much later, how my ward had voted in 1932 and 1936 when Roosevelt ran: Ward Fourteen's solid Jewish vote had gone 71 percent for FDR in 1932—but when they felt they knew him, by 1936, the Jews of Ward Fourteen ran up 85.2 percent for Roosevelt, the highest mark in the Democratic city! Roosevelt could reach out to ordinary people and stir them; even if the ward captains had wished or urged otherwise, Roosevelt's ideas would have caught the ward. His ideas were changing America.

For us in the ward, however, though Roosevelt was President, the Irish were Government. In the Boston of my youth, where the Irish clearly outnumbered all other groups, it was hard to perceive that their historic role in American politics was the teaching of government. They played this same role in the cities where they were only one of many minorities—in Chicago, in St. Paul, in New York and Philadelphia—just as they played it in my city, where they were the majority. Of all the immigrant groups, only the Irish spoke English at home, and more than that, understood the Anglo-American courts, law and officialdom—sheriff, alderman, bailiff, surrogate. They shared the anguish of other immigrants, but they were neither so voiceless nor so helpless. They knew how to deal with the boy in trouble, the peddler caught without a license, the street fights that brought in the police, the hunger for jobs; and with that understanding they acted as intermediaries between government and the bewildered immigrants. They could drop a word in a judge's ear, intercede with the school board to get, say, a girl into the city's teachers college. Their fee was gratefully and willingly paid, and might be as high as a dozen sure votes. Piling up votes, the Irish ran local government pretty much as they chose—in Boston under Big Jim Curley reaching a high, florid corruption that became a national farce. Farce, perhaps—but Big Jim Curley liked roses, and in our ward we knew that the rose garden in Franklin Park was there because Curley had put it there, and mothers could park their baby carriages in the rose garden and sun themselves and their children in fragrance because Curley liked roses.

So government for us was simple and direct, reaching only

occasionally beyond our neighborhood. Far away, remote, there was FDR, who, thank God, believed in jobs for people. As I grew older, it also turned out that he was against Hitler, and we enshrined him in our hearts. Below the President was the state; Massachusetts, in those days, was run by Yankees. No one in our ward knew what a state was supposed to do, and as nearly as we knew, the State of Massachusetts did nothing. After that came the city, which was run by Curley and had little to do with us.

So that government, as it reached down into Ward Fourteen, was the police and the schoolteachers. The police were all Irish. They cuffed us, slapped us, kicked us when we gave them lip. The schools were just as Irish. Irish schoolteachers dried our tears, kissed and coddled us, and taught us what their Yankee overlords in the Boston public-school system directed them to teach.

In the descent of ideas, therefore, family came first, street next—and then public school.

Whatever the general theory of the Boston School Committee was, in the state in which Horace Mann had first broached the idea of free public education, its practice, when I was going to school, was excellent.

As the Boston public-school system absorbed me, it was simple. Each neighborhood had an elementary school within a child's walking distance—kindergarten through third grade. At the level of the William E. Endicott School, where I began, the Irish had replaced the Yankee schoolmarms and my teachers were Miss Phelan, Miss Brennan, Miss Murray, Miss Kelly. They were supposed to teach us to read, write (by the Palmer method) and add. They also made us memorize poetry, and the poetry was all New England—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier. But memory was essential, as it was in Hebrew school, where one memorized the Bible.

Each neighborhood also had an intermediate school—in my case, the Christopher Gibson School. There segregation began, boys separated from girls for special periods. In the fourth grade, boys had special periods to learn carpentry, girls to learn sewing. In the fifth grade, it was electricity and wiring for boys, cooking for girls. Vocational and book learning were taught in the same building. I can still tell a ripsaw from a crosscut saw by what was taught me (by a lady carpentry teacher, Miss Sprague) in the fourth grade. I can still wire lamps in series or in parallel, insulate or install cutoff switches by what was

taught me in the fifth grade. But—most importantly—I first became aware of the word "history" in the sixth grade at the Christopher Gibson School—and my teacher was Miss Fuller.

How can I say what a ten-year-old boy remembers of a schoolteacher lost in time? She was stout, gray-haired, dimpled, schoolmarmish, almost never angry. She was probably the first Protestant I ever met; she taught history vigorously; and she was special, the first person who made me think I might make something of myself. She was the kind of teacher who could set fire to the imaginations of the ordinary children who sat in lumps before her, and to do so was probably the chief reward she sought.

Her course in American history began, of course, at a much later date than the history we were taught at Hebrew school. In Boston, history began in 1630—when the Puritans came. It then worked back and forth, but every date had to be impeccably remembered; Columbus was 1492, Cabot was 1497. Cortés was 1519, as was Magellan; and so on, moving through Jamestown, 1607; New York, 1614; Plymouth Colony, 1620; then other dates that led up to the settlement of Boston—1630! 1630! 1630! We also had to know the names in the tests: William Penn, Sir George Carteret, King James (which had to be written King James I, or else you were marked wrong).

Miss Fuller did not stop with names and dates. First you had to get them right, but then they became the pegs on which connections between events were to be hung. In this she was far ahead of most of the teachers of her day. For example: Thanksgiving. How did it come about? What would you have thought that first winter in Plymouth, if you had come from England, and survived? How would you invite the Indians to your feast? She decided we would have a play the day before Thanksgiving, a free-form play in the classroom, in which we would all together explore the meeting of Puritans and Indians, and the meaning of Thanksgiving. She divided the class, entirely Jewish, into those children who were American-born and spoke true English, and those who were recent arrivals and spoke only broken English or Yiddish. I was Elder William Bradford, because I spoke English well. "Itchie" Rachlin, whose father was an unemployed trumpet player recently arrived from Russia, and who spoke vivid Yiddish, was Squanto, our Indian friend. Miss Fuller hoped that those who could not speak English would squawk strange Indian sounds while I, translating their sounds to the rest of the Puritans, all of us in black cardboard cone hats, would offer good will and brotherhood. "Itchie" and the other recently arrived immigrant children played the game of

being "Indian" for a few minutes, then fell into Yiddish, pretending it was Indian talk. Miss Fuller could not, of course, understand them, but I tried nevertheless to clean up their Yiddish vulgarities in my translation to the other little Puritans, who could not help but giggle. ("*Vos is dos vor traef?*" said Itchie, meaning: "You want us to eat pig food?" and I would translate in English: "What kind of strange food is this before us?") Miss Fuller became furious as we laughed our way through the play; and when I tried to explain, she was hurt and upset. Thanksgiving was sacred to her.

But she was a marvelous teacher. Once we had learned the names and dates from 1630 to the Civil War, she let us talk and speculate, driving home the point that history connected to "now," to "us." America for her was all about freedom, and all the famous phrases from "Give me liberty or give me death" to the Gettysburg Address had to be memorized by her classes—and understood.

She was also a very earnest, upward-striving teacher. I realize now that she must have been working for an advanced degree, for she went to night school at Boston University to take education courses. This, too, reached from outside to me. One day she told my mother about a project her night-school seminar was conducting in how much independent research a youngster of ten or eleven could do on his own—one of those projects now so commonplace in progressive schools. Would my mother mind, she asked, if I was given such an assignment, and then reported on it to her seminar? My mother said yes after Miss Fuller promised to bring me home herself afterwards.

My assignment was to study immigration, and then to speak to the seminar about whether immigrants were good or bad for America. Her seminar mates would question me to find out how well I had mastered the subject. The Immigration Act of 1924—the "Closing of the Gates"—had just been passed; there was much to read in both papers and magazines about the controversy, but my guide was my father. He put it both ways: the country had been built by immigrants, so immigrants were not bad. He had been an immigrant himself. On the other hand, as a strong labor man, he followed the A.F. of L. line of those days. The National Association of Manufacturers (the capitalists) wanted to continue unrestricted immigration so they could sweat cheap labor. But the American Federation of Labor wanted immigration restricted to keep the wages of American workingmen from being undercut by foreigners. This was a conundrum for my father: he was against the capitalists and for the A.F. of L.; but he was an immigrant himself, as were all our friends and neighbors. He helped me get all

the facts, and I made a speech on the platform of a classroom at Boston University Teachers College at nine one night, explaining both sides of the story and taking no position. I enjoyed it all, especially when the teachers began asking me questions; I had all the dates and facts, and an attentive audience, but no answers then just as I have none now. I must have done well, for Miss Fuller kissed me and bought me candy to eat on the streetcar. It became clear to me, as we talked on the way home, that immigrants were history, too. History was happening now, all about us, and the gossip of Erie Street and the problem of whether someone's cousin could get a visa back in the old country and come here were really connected to the past, and to Abraham Lincoln, Henry Clay, Sam Adams, Patrick Henry and the elder William Bradford.

If I went on to the Boston Public Latin School, I think it was because of Miss Fuller and my mother; it was Miss Fuller who persuaded my mother that there was something more than a lump in the boy, and pointed me in the direction of the Latin School.

The Boston school system offered then what seems to me still a reasonable set of choices after intermediate school. You could go to a local high school—Charlestown High School, Roxbury Memorial High School, South Boston High School. Or, if your parents chose, you could go to a "downtown" high school. Today these central schools would be called "magnet schools," "enrichment schools," "elite schools." They served the entire Boston community—a Commerce High School to learn bookkeeping and trade, a Mechanic Arts High School to learn blueprints, welding, machining, and, at the summit, the Boston Public Latin School, the oldest public school in America, founded in 1635. It was free choice: you could walk to your local community high school, or you could go downtown to the central, quality schools. There were no school buses then, so if you did want to take the half-hour trolley ride to a downtown school, you bought student tickets, beige-brown tabs at five cents each, half the price of the dime fare for a regular rider on the Boston transit system. Ten cents a day, five days a week, for carfare was a considerable sum. You had to *want* to go.

My mother, my father, myself all agreeing, I chose the Latin School.

The Boston Public Latin School reeked of history. Harvard had been founded only in 1636, a year after the Latin School, because, so the school boasted, there had to be a college to take its first graduates. The school had sat originally on Beacon Hill, before being moved

ultimately to the Fenway, where it was when I attended. The original school on the hill had given its name to the street which is still there: School Street in Boston. We learned that the legendary boys who had outfaced the British on the hill, and thrown snowballs at the Redcoats who put cinders on the icy streets where they sleighed, were Latin School boys. They were the first recorded student demonstrators in American history. In our Latin School assembly hall, the frieze bore proudly the names of boys who had graduated to mark American history. From Franklin, Adams and Hancock, on through Emerson, Motley, Eliot, Payne, Quincy, Sumner, Warren, Winthrop—the trail-blazers pointed the way. The frieze might later have listed a Kennedy, a Bernstein, a Wharton. But all this history translated quite precisely to the immigrant parents of Boston. The Latin School was the gateway to Harvard—as much so in 1928, when I entered, as it had been for hundreds of years before. No longer is it so.

In my day, the Latin School was a cruel school—but it may have been the best public school in the country. The old Boston version of "Open Admissions" held that absolutely anyone was free to enter. And the school was free to fail and expel absolutely anyone who did not meet its standards. It accepted students without discrimination, and it flunked them—Irish, Italians, Jewish, Protestant, black—with equal lack of discrimination. Passing grade was fifty, and to average eighty or better was phenomenal. Our monthly tests were excerpts from the College Board examinations of previous years—and we learned "test-manship" early, beginning at age fourteen. The entire Latin School was an obstacle course in "testmanship," a skill which, we learned, meant that one must grasp the question quickly; answer hard, with minimum verbiage; and do it all against a speeding clock. If you scored well in Latin School classroom tests in arithmetic, the College Boards held no peril—you would do better in those exams; and at Harvard, almost certainly, you would qualify for the advanced section of Mathematics A.

The Latin School taught the mechanics of learning with little pretense of culture, enrichment or enlargement of horizons. Mr. Russo, who taught English in the first year, had the face of a prizefighter—a bald head which gleamed, a pug nose, a jut jaw, hard and sinister eyes which smiled only when a pupil scored an absolute triumph in grammar. He was less interested in the rhymes of *The Idylls of the King* or "Evangeline," or the story in *Quentin Durward,* than in drubbing into us the structure of paragraph and sentence. The paragraph began with the "topic sentence"—that was the cornerstone

of all teaching in composition. And sentences came with "subjects," "predicates," "metaphors," "similes," "analogies." Verbs were transitive, intransitive and sometimes subjunctive. He taught the English language as if he were teaching us to dismantle an automobile engine or a watch and then assemble it again correctly. We learned clean English from him. Mr. Graetsch taught German in the same way, mechanically, so that one remembered all the rest of one's life that six German prepositions take the dative case—*aus-bei-mit, nach-von-zu,* in alphabetical order. French was taught by Mr. Scully. Not only did we memorize passages (*D'un pas encore vaillant et ferme, un vieux prêtre marche sur la route poudreuse*), but we memorized them so well that long after one had forgotten the title of the work, one remembered its phrases; all irregular French verbs were mastered by the end of the second year.

What culture was pumped in came in ancient history, taught by Mr. Hayes; American history taught by Mr. Nemzoff, who enlarged on what Miss Fuller had taught in the sixth grade; and Latin itself, taught by "Farmer" Wilbur. "Farmer" Wilbur was a rustic who raised apples on his farm outside Boston, and would bring them in by the bushel to hand out to the boys who did well. Latin was drudgery; one learned Caesar, one groaned through Cicero, one went on to Virgil. I did badly in Latin, although ancient history fascinated me; and not until I came many years later to American politics did I realize how much of "Farmer" Wilbur's teaching of Caesar and Cicero had flaked off into the sediment of my thinking.

Yet, though the choice had been my own, my first three years at the Latin School were an unrelieved torment. I barely managed a sixty average, which put me somewhere in the lower third of my class. But then in June 1931 my father died, and I was plunged into an education that remains for all men and women of my generation their great shaping experience—the lessons taught by the Great Depression.

One reads now that the 1920s were boom years, that the Great Depression did not begin until the stock market crash of October 1929.

For those of us of the underclass, the Depression had begun long before then. I had started a schoolboy diary the same year I entered the Latin School, in 1928. On historic Black Friday, October 29, the day of the great Wall Street crash of 1929, my diary makes no mention of the event. It says: "No money all week, Pa brought home $2.00 today, Mama is crying again."

The two years after that, the two years during which my father's

heart was broken, come back at me again and again like a nightmare.

This was our country.

I was, by then, an American history buff. But even a teen-ager could see that this country was not working for us. There were no clothes—literally no new clothes for over four years in the family; all of us wore hand-me-downs. We traded at a delicatessen store where, occasionally, I had to ask Mr. Schiff if he could slice an *achtel* (an eighth of a pound) of corned beef into six slices, one for each of us in the family. Mr. Schiff could perform that butcher's miracle, and a slice of a sixth of an eighth of a pound of corned beef was so paper thin that you could see the light through it if you held it up—but if you held it up, it shredded in your fingers. For a passing delicacy, I would walk a mile to the baking plant of Drake's Cakes, and there, at the factory, could buy two pounds of day-old stale cake for ten cents. A mile the other way was a chocolate factory. For a dime, you could buy old and moldy chocolates about to be thrown out; but such a dime for chocolate was an extravagance. Movies vanished entirely from the family budget—so the children read books instead. I began to walk back and forth to the Latin School, four miles away, whenever the weather was fair, to save the nickel fare. And as one walked to school by Roxbury Crossing and through the factory district, one saw that the shoe plants were closed down, no workers going in and out, no smoke from the cold smokestacks that silhouetted my route. The year I entered Latin School, in 1928, there were 948 shoe factories in Greater Boston; a year later, only 817. By 1930, in the city of Boston there were only eight thousand shoe workers; by 1940, only half that number.

What I saw and what I felt had no connection at all with what I had learned of American history. The evidence before me said that Papa was right—capitalism had ruined us. Capitalism did not care what happened to us. No one cared what happened to us. I worked on off-school days and during the school vacations for a house renovator, a small-time contractor who had me on the job from eight in the morning until the house was scraped of its old wallpaper, its crumbling plaster gouged out and respackled; for a twelve-hour day I was paid two dollars, and glad to have it. I was lucky—until the little contractor went broke, too, and that was the end of that job. People hungered. Lives ended.

The Depression was too immense an event to grasp. Our streets and my friends hived with young adolescents who were joining either the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), or the Young Communist

League (YCL) or the Young Worker Zionists, whose song ran: "Off we go to Palestine—the hell with the Depression." American politics seemed to offer nothing. When I was sixteen or seventeen, I visited the local Democratic Party storefront on Blue Hill Avenue, the first political headquarters I ever entered. I might get a job, I thought, by getting into politics—and a thug grabbed me by the shoulders, kicked me so hard that the base of my spine still tingles at the memory, and said that they didn't want any goddamn kids around this place. It must have been the year that Franklin D. Roosevelt was building his 1932 campaign for the Presidency; I now know he had Curley and the Boston machine with him; but from where I walked the streets, I could not see what Franklin Roosevelt would do, and I loathed the whole system. Revolution, only revolution, would save us—but how did you connect revolution with what Miss Fuller and Mr. Nemzoff taught of American history?

It was worse when my father died. I was sixteen then. My diary records a one-line sentence, June 16, 1931: "Pa died today." And the memory of the year after he died I cannot, despite every effort, bring back. I pushed it out of mind long ago. I know, technically, that my mother let me finish my last year of school before I went to work—I was to graduate in the class of 1932 at the Boston Latin School. But in dignity the price of my finishing the Latin School, instead of going out to hunt work, was crushing.

We were on home relief.

It was shameful—we, of a learned family, on home relief. With my father's death, we were five left. And for five people the city of Boston gave eleven dollars a week. We survived on eleven dollars a week, for my grandmother, upstairs, had ceased demanding that we pay rent. But to get home relief, in those days, my mother had to take a streetcar (ten cents each way) downtown to the relief office. And there, after standing in line for hours, she would receive a five-dollar greenback and six ones. Each week she made the trip, each trip brought her home desolate. It was intolerable. My marks at school rose spectacularly in the last year of misery. If there was no father left, I had to make it on my own. If I wanted to go to college, I would have to do it by scholarship, and scholarship meant getting good marks. Given this need, my marks jumped from a sixty to a ninety average. My final College Board examinations brought marks then called "highest honors." And immediately after graduation, there was an acceptance to Harvard. But the acceptance carried no scholarship money; no stipend, nothing but the right to enroll. And so the

certificate became a trophy to put away in a drawer. The problem was how to get off relief—and yet survive.

The struggle to survive spared no one. My sister, Gladys, a woman of extraordinary gifts, had to leave college after her first year to find a job as a library assistant. My two younger brothers—Robert, then nine, and Alvin, twelve—were conscripted to sell newspapers at the corners before going to school. That meant they had to be roused from bed before six each morning, and thrust out into the winter cold. And I woke at five each morning, for I had won from the local news wholesaler the right to run the streetcars on the tough ride from Franklin Park to Egleston Square, peddling papers.

On the streetcars I met the Irish as workingmen. Except for Mr. Snow—I always called him Mr. Snow—who was a motorman six days a week and taught a Congregational Sunday school on the seventh day, the motormen were all Irish. Most were Galway men. They were proud of being men of Galway, and they told me why men of Galway were different from men of Cork, or Tipperary, or Dublin. It sounded very much like Jewish talk—why Pinsk Jews were different from Warsaw Jews, or Odessa Jews, or Lvov Jews. They were hard men, but once they accepted you they offered the camaraderie that makes Irish radicals die for each other. Of these men, the meanest was Motorman Conley. He was hard-faced, surly and profane. Even though I wore the nickel-plated medallion which officially entitled me to sell newspapers on the streetcars, he wanted me to "stay the hell off" his car. I had to brace him, and hopped his car one day to sell the papers; I rode three stops trying to explain to him that I had to make a living, too, for my mother and the kids, and I had the right, and I didn't want to have a fight with him and on and on. Finally, he said, "O.K." And then, after that, he not only gave me the key to the booth of the Franklin Park station, where there was an electric heater to warm the fingers and toes of the motormen on the early-morning run; but he also began to help me get more money from the boss. I was doing well selling papers, making between two and three dollars a day. But I could also hand in returns and get credit for the unsold papers against my account with the boss. Conley figured out for me that we could screw my boss and I could make an extra half buck a day if he picked up for me the discarded newspapers at Egleston Square, the turnaround of his trolley run. He would bring me back a batch of newspaper throwaways at ten or eleven in the morning; and if they were neatly enough cast off, I could refold them and slip them into my returns, thus making 1.3 cents on each false return that I claimed from the

boss. I am sorry now that I cheated the boss by half a dollar a day, but he probably cranked it into his calculations of the net he took from the newsboys he "owned." And since my cash return to him was high, I was not challenged; he sent them back to the newspapers anyway. Conley and I became friends, in a surly way, as he helped me screw the bosses; we were both against the system.

Newspapering lasted for over a year. I would scream the headlines; and occasionally, when I saw an old Latin School friend taking the trolley in town to Boston University or Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I would scream the headlines in Latin. I could sell almost as many papers, if I put emotion into the call, by shrieking, *"Quo usque, O Catilina, tandem abutere patientia nostra, quem ad finem nos eludet iste furor tuus . . ."* as I could by shrieking anything else. But my old schoolmates of the Latin School ignored me. I was a dropout, they were college day students.

Newspapering led to cheating—all newsstand operations do, as I learned later when I tried to manage magazines, or tried to find out how my more successful books were selling on paperback newsstands. I converted some of the regular streetcar customers to home delivery, and within a year, I had a growing home-delivery route which would bring in several dollars a week all by itself, apart from what the boss knew I was selling in the open.

Far more importantly, I had won a steady job—teaching Hebrew to children in the local Hebrew school at fourteen dollars a week, subjecting them to the same cruelty to which I had been subjected when a child. Middle-aged men and women now approach me as I travel and tell me they were my students and that I was a stern but effective teacher of tradition to the young. But I was then just eighteen myself, full of the juices of life. Thus, rather than teaching children the Hebrew characters by reading in the standard books of the Bible, which they were required to decipher but not understand, I had them do their rote reading from the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. They could not understand that text either, but to hear little boys and girls pipe the lines of love in the ancient language soothed me in the dreary evening sessions. Two books of the Bible are generally not taught to youngsters in the modern Hebrew schools: the Song of Songs and, for obvious reasons, Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes I had won to myself by my own reading. But listening to the little children reading aloud the Song of Songs was, probably, the closest I came to erotic reading.

And then, in the fall of 1934, when I was two years out of Latin School, confused, angry and on my way to nowhere, two things

happened. Harvard College gave me a scholarship of $220 and the Burroughs Newsboys Foundation gave me a college grant of $180 (I still ran a newspaper route). Two-twenty and one-eighty came to four hundred dollars—which was the exact fee for a year's tuition at Harvard, and so I could try that for a year. Harvard then required a bond that a freshman would do no property damage there, and luckily, our neighbor, Mrs. Goldman, who owned a house down the street, was willing to sign such a bond. So in September of 1934, cutting a corner here and amplifying a hope there, I took the subway into Harvard Square to enroll.

I have, in the years since, served as an overseer of that majestic institution Harvard University, a member of the Honorable and Reverend Board of the most ancient corporation in the Western world, the chosen thirty who tip their silk hats as they file, two by two, past the statue of John Harvard on Commencement Day in the Yard. But it was a better Harvard I entered in the 1930s than it was later, when I sat on its Board of Overseers, or than it is today.

One emerged, as one still does, from the subway exit in the Square and faced an old red-brick wall behind which stretched, to my fond eye, what remains still the most beautiful campus in America, the Harvard Yard. If there is any one place in all America that mirrors better all American history, I do not know of it.

The signature building of the Harvard Yard was the Widener Library, its gray façade and pillars dominating all the open inner space. Widener was the crownpiece of the largest university library in the world and its architecture made a flat statement: that books and learning were what a school was all about. But the rest of the Yard spoke history. Across the green was the chapel built to commemorate Harvard men fallen in the First World War, which would, in time, have carved on its tablets the names of thirty-two of my classmates who were to fall in World War II. Across the street from the Yard, on the edge of Cambridge Common, stood the Washington Elm, where, legend claims, George Washington took command of the Continental Army in 1775. Beyond rose the gorgeous Romanesque bulk of "Mem" Hall—the memorial for the veterans of the Civil War. To the north were acres and acres of a university no one person has ever fully explored—law school, graduate schools, museums, laboratories. To the south the residential houses rose along the Charles and there, beneath their turrets of red and blue and yellow, one could lie on the grass beside the slow-flowing Charles River with a friend and gaze at the

Harvard Business School across the river. The business school, though few knew it, had its roots in history, too. It had sprung out of the Spanish-American War, when a few public-spirited alumni decided that America, for its new empire, needed a colonial school of administration to match Britain's imperial and colonial civil services. The school they envisioned became, in the course of time, the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, eventually fulfilling the imperial dreams of its sponsors by staffing the multinational corporations of the twentieth century.

Revolutionary War, Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, had all left marks behind at Harvard. World War II was on its way; and Harvard was in change under the leadership of James Bryant Conant, who was to leave to head a secret project called the "uranium bomb." Harvard had entered the modern world of learning in 1869, under the leadership of Charles William Eliot, who presided until 1909; it had passed through twenty-four years of the presidency of Abbott Lawrence Lowell, an aristocrat of great personal wealth who had candied Harvard's overwhelmingly New England student body with a top layer of the wealthiest adolescents of the Eastern seaboard. And then came Conant, the greatest of them all. Conant was of New England lineage as ancient as Lowell's or Eliot's, and was, like Eliot, a chemist of extraordinary creativity. Conant wanted to make Harvard something more than a New England school; he wanted its faculty to be more than a gentlemen's club of courtly learned men, wanted its student body to be national in origin. Excellence was his goal as he began shaking up both faculty and student body, and in the end, twenty years later, when he left in 1953, his insistence on excellence had made Harvard the most competitive school in American scholarship, a meritocracy in which students and professors vied for honors with little mercy or kindness.

But then, at the beginning of Conant's regime in the thirties, Harvard combined the best of the old warmth and the new strivings. Conant himself would address the freshman class. We all squatted on the floor of the Freshman Union, and he told us what a university was: a place for free minds. "If you call everyone to the right of you a Bourbon and everyone to the left of you a Communist, you'll get nothing out of Harvard," he said to us. And went on to explain that what we would get out of Harvard was what we could take from it ourselves; Harvard was open, so—go seek.

Students divide themselves by their own discriminations in every generation, and the group I ran with had a neat system of classifica-

tion. Harvard, my own group held, was divided into three groups—white men, gray men and meatballs. I belonged to the meatballs, by self-classification. White men were youngsters of great name; my own class held a Boston Saltonstall, a New York Straus, a Chicago Marshall Field, two Roosevelts (John and Kermit), a Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. The upper classes had another Roosevelt (Franklin, Jr.), a Rockefeller (David, with whom I shared a tutor in my sophomore year), a Morgan, and New York and Boston names of a dozen different fashionable pedigrees. Students of such names had automobiles; they went to Boston deb parties, football games, the June crew race against Yale; they belonged to clubs. At Harvard today, they are called "preppies," the private-school boys of mythical "St. Grottlesex."

Between white men above and meatballs at the bottom came the gray men. The gray men were mostly public-high-school boys, sturdy sons of America's middle class. They went out for football and baseball, manned the *Crimson* and the *Lampoon,* ran for class committees and, later in life, for school committees and political office. They came neither of the aristocracy nor of the deserving poor, as did most meatballs and scholarship boys. Caspar Weinberger, of my class of 1938, for example, was president of the *Crimson* and graduated magna cum laude; he later became Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, but as an undergraduate was a gray man from California. John King, of the same class of 1938, was another gray man; he became governor of New Hampshire. Wiley Mayne, an earnest student of history, who graduated with us, was a gray man from Iowa, later becoming congressman from Sioux City. He served on the House Judiciary Committee that voted to impeach Richard Nixon—with Wiley Mayne voting to support the President. The most brilliant member of the class was probably Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., who defied categorization. Definitely no meatball, Schlesinger lacked then either the wealth or the savoir-faire of the white men. Indeed, Schlesinger, who was to go on to a fame surpassing that of his scholar father, was one who could apparently mingle with both white men *and* meatballs. In his youth, Schlesinger was a boy of extraordinary sweetness and generosity, one of the few on campus who would be friendly to a Jewish meatball, not only a liberal by heredity, but a liberal in practice. Since Wiley Mayne, Arthur Schlesinger and I were all rivals, in an indistinct way, in the undergraduate rivalry of the History Department, I followed their careers with some interest. Mayne was a conservative, tart-tongued and stiff. I remember on the night of our Class Day dance, as we were all about to leave, he

unburdened himself to me on "Eastern liberals who look down their long snob noses on people like me from the Midwest." Over the years Mayne grew into a milder, gentler, warmer person until in his agony over Nixon, wrestling with his conscience on whether to impeach or not, he seemed to be perhaps the most sensitive and human member of the Judiciary Committee. Schlesinger, by contrast, developed a certainty about affairs, a public tartness of manner associated with the general liberal rigidity of the late sixties that offended many—and yet, for all that, he remained as kind and gentle to old friends like myself, with whose politics he came profoundly to disagree, as he had been in boyhood. Both Schlesinger and Mayne, the liberal and the conservative, were always absolutely firm in their opinions. I, in the years starting at Harvard, and continuing in later life, wandered all through the political spectrum, and envied them both for their certainties.

I find some difficulty in describing what a "meatball" was. Meatballs were usually day students or scholarship students. We were at Harvard not to enjoy the games, the girls, the burlesque shows of the Old Howard, the companionship, the elms, the turning leaves of fall, the grassy banks of the Charles. We had come to get the Harvard badge, which says "Veritas," but really means a job somewhere in the future, in some bureaucracy, in some institution, in some school, laboratory, university or law firm.

Conant was the first president to recognize that meatballs were Harvard men, too, and so he set apart a ground floor room at Dudley Hall where we could bring our lunches in brown paper bags and eat at a table, or lounge in easy chairs between classes. The master of this strange enclave of commuting Irish, Jewish and Italian youngsters from Greater Boston was a young historian named Charles Duhig, whose argument was that the most revolutionary force in history was the middle class. Duhig had contempt for the working class ("slobs"), disdain for the upper class. His theory held that modern history is carried forward chiefly by the middle class, their children, and what moves them to the future. In us, his wards, he had a zoo of specimens of the mobile lower middle class and he enjoyed watching us resist Communist penetration.

Dudley Hall was plowed regularly by Harvard's intellectual upper-class Communists, who felt that we were of the oppressed. Occasionally such well-bred, rich or elite Communist youngsters from the resident houses would bring a neat brown-paper-bag lunch and join us at the round tables to persuade us, as companions, of the inevitable proletarian revolution. Duhig, our custodian, welcomed

their visits because he knew his scholarship boys could take care of such Communists in debate as easily as they could take care of the Republican youngsters who staffed the *Crimson*. We were Duhig's own middle class in the flesh—hungry and ambitious. Most of us, largely Boston Latin School graduates, knew more about poverty than anyone from Beacon Hill or the fashionable East Side of New York. We hated poverty; and meant to have no share in it. We had come to Harvard not to help the working classes, but to get out of the working classes. We were on the make. And in my own case, the approach to Harvard and its riches was that of a looter. Harvard had the keys to the gates; what lay behind the gates I could not guess, but all that lay there was to be looted. Not only were there required courses to be attended, but there were courses given by famous men, lectures open to all, where no one guarded the entry. I could listen. There were museums to be seen, libraries and poetry rooms of all kinds to tarry in—and stacks and stacks and stacks of books. It was a place to grab at ideas and facts, and I grabbed at history.

One had a choice, in one's freshman year, of taking either one of two required courses—History I or Government I. Government I was a "gut" course, and the student underground passed the word that no one ever failed in Government I. History I had the reputation of being a nut-cracker; no one ever got an A in History I except by luck. But History I was the course most freshmen took because its professor, "Frisky" Merriman, was perhaps the most colorful character on Harvard's then vivid faculty of characters. He believed history was story—thus, entertainment.

In History I, Roger Bigelow Merriman stretched the story from the Age of the Antonines right down to the Treaty of Versailles—all 1800 years from the breakup of the Roman Empire to the breakup of Western Europe in 1914-1918. He is now considered a primitive by Harvard's present more elegant and austere masters of history—an academic histrionic who made his course in Western civilization a vaudeville sequence of thirty-six acts. Merriman could entertain a hall of six hundred students and hold them spellbound; he paced the platform from end to end, roaring, wheedling, stage-whispering, occasionally screeching in falsetto and earning fairly his nickname. We raced through the Antonines, enjoyed the Middle Ages, saluted Caliph Harun al-Rashid, thrilled with the struggle of Moors and Catholics in Spain, mourned for Boabdil, last sultan of the Moors. But the course was like an express train, pausing only at major stops on the

track of history, and always, at every turning point, there would be "Frisky" Merriman, like a conductor calling the next stop and ultimate arrival, closing his lectures with "Unity, gentlemen, unity!"

Europe, he held, had sought the long-lost unity Rome had given it two thousand years ago as a man seeks to recapture a dream. Noted professors came from their own history courses to give a guest lecture or a week of lectures on their favorite subject, all falling into Merriman's mood as vaudevillians who try not to disappoint their producer. The last of these was the best, a young professor called James Phinney Baxter III, later to become president of Williams College and deputy director of the OSS. Baxter had observed World War I and thought that the machine gun was the instrument that ended the Age of Wars: he would crouch and go *hup-hup-hup* with an imaginary machine gun on the lecture platform explaining just what that machine gun had done to warfare and history between 1914 and 1918. I would have enjoyed hearing Baxter, twenty years later, on the nuclear bomb. But after Baxter, as after every other lecturer or turning point, Merriman would bring the course back on track: "Unity, gentlemen, unity!" he would roar. Charlemagne, Napoleon, Bismarck, the Hohenstaufen emperors, the Popes, the Hapsburgs, the Versailles Treaty—all had sought to give unity to Europe. It was a theme that would echo all the rest of my life; and resound again when I came to Europe to report the Marshall Plan, the Common Market and the dreams of Jean Monnet, who had never heard of "Frisky" Merriman but held exactly the same view of Europe.

History I led in two directions, both of them luring me from my past without my knowing it.

The first direction in which History I led, as I romanticize the beginning, came by mechanical accident. It led across a corridor in Boylston Hall—to China.

It happened this way: A reading room on the ground floor of Boylston Hall was set aside for the hundreds of students who took Merriman's course, and it would become crowded, sweaty and steamy on weekends as we crammed for the next week's sections. But across the corridor in the same building was the library of the Harvard-Yenching Institute—the library which would grow over the next forty years into the greatest collection of Oriental volumes outside Asia. It was easier to study in the empty library of the Harvard-Yenching Institute than in the History I reading room, so I would surreptitiously cross the corridor on Saturday afternoons. And if I was bleary with reading about medieval trade, or the Reformation, or the Age of

Imperialism, I could get up and pick Chinese volumes off the shelves—volumes on fine rice paper, blue-bound, bamboo-hooked volumes with strange characters, volumes with their own particular odor, an Oriental mustiness different from the mustiness of Western books. As I became more and more accustomed to the Oriental atmosphere, and my eyes rested on the scrolls of calligraphy on the walls, I began to feel at home. The Boston Latin School had given me reading knowledge of Latin, German and French. Yiddish I understood from home. Hebrew was the language I knew I spoke best after my native English. Why not, then, take a giant step, and add Chinese to my languages—and find out what the blue-bound volumes said. And my father had told me to pay attention to China. The choice, then, at the end of my freshman year, as I had to choose a field of concentration for my sophomore year, became Chinese history and language.

And a more dangerous choice I never made.

Chinese is one of the simplest languages to speak, but the most difficult to read. The Chinese Department at Harvard, in those days, had the standards of the Emperor Ch'ien-lung laced with a dash of sadism. Their theory, entirely wrong, was that no youngster in his teens, no undergraduate, could possibly master the Chinese language. Conant had overruled such desiccated scholarship in his second year as president, and in my sophomore year the study of the Chinese language was thrown open to undergraduates for the first time. Chinese I, the introductory course, was conducted by one of the most brutal men I have ever met. The class had five students, three graduate students and two undergraduates; but our professor was determined to prove his point (that undergraduates could *not* learn Chinese) by trying to flunk both of us immediately. The other undergraduate collapsed quickly. I, however, was at Harvard on scholarship, and if I flunked, I would lose my scholarship and thus my dreams would end. The professor taught the language by main force—simple visual memorization. We were never taught that almost all Chinese characters have a phonetic element which gives the sound, and an idea element which gives the meaning. Chinese should be taught to children while young—while their minds are elastic enough to associate vision and meaning. Graduates of American high schools now learn Chinese with far greater ease than graduates of Harvard in the old days. In those days at Boylston Hall one pounded each character into the mind by sheer force of recall, as one pounds nails into a board. I was put on notice of dismissal within six weeks of

joining the course; and since my survival depended on staying at Harvard, I must not flunk, I must study—until one and two and three in the morning, forcing my memory to inscribe and retrieve Chinese characters. As the professor increased the burden in each session, the entire class, even graduate students, began to wilt. He relented, finally, and I survived, to get an A.

What we learned in Chinese was almost entirely useless. By the time I graduated from Harvard, I had memorized and could recognize by sight three thousand individual Chinese ideograms and as many more combinations of ideograms; I still have the memory cards on which each is written. But I can no longer recognize more than a hundred of the characters I once mastered, and can no longer read any kind of Chinese. All the characters and all the literature I was taught came from the Chinese classics: we read and translated Confucius and Mencius, histories and ancient odes. None of the spectacular Chinese novels of tradition (and the Chinese invented the novel form almost two thousand years ago), none of the lyric poems of the Tang or the nostalgic poems of the Sung were taught to us. We were taught the classics as if we were training for examinations in the Manchu civil service—and the classics were rules, regulations, moralities, history. And war. Those who think of the Chinese as a sublimely philosophical and peaceful people should be steeped in such Chinese classics. The Chinese tradition seeks order, discipline, moral behavior at all times; and when this order in the mind is affronted, the Chinese system reaches, as their tradition records, paroxysms of violence and ferocity.

Parallel to the path across Boylston Hall was the second direction in which I was invited—to the History Department. And history as it was taught in my four years at Harvard is, in retrospect, a wonder. Quite simply, history was not yet considered a science but was still thought more noble than a craft. The professors were a colony of storytellers, held together by the belief that in their many stories they might find a truth. They still cared about students and lingered after class for conversations. No better preparation for what was to come to me in life could have been planned than what came to me at Harvard, by accident and timing and osmosis of curiosity.

The best course in American history was given by Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., and Paul Buck. Schlesinger, a magnificent teacher, opened the course by telling us that American history was singularly poor in ideas, deficient in political theory, in philosophic system, in abstractions of all sorts. He insisted that American history swung in regular cycles of sixteen years, from hope to fear, from liberalism to conserva-

tism. He concluded his masterly introductory lecture by saying: "The American people have not been governed by political theory, but purely by opportunism . . . because of this plasticity we have been spared violent and bloody convulsions. . . ."

At Harvard, thus, I made the third round in American history: Miss Fuller had guided me the first time around, the Latin School the second, and at Harvard a large covey of professors gave me the final tour. But Schlesinger and Buck had set the tone: proud and patriotic as Miss Fuller had been, they saw American history as a struggle from which the good usually emerged triumphant. I was thus early bent to this patriotic view, and confirmed in it by higher learning, before I went out to see the story myself.

Yet Harvard's History Department offered more than American history. It offered a banquet of invitations to the past, of famous courses, of byways and coves and special delights of learning. Professor Crane Brinton, an urbane and aloof man, offered a course in the French Revolution. Cynical, caustic, disdainful of all morals, Brinton claimed as his own particular hero Talleyrand; but he lectured on Marat, Danton, Robespierre with an insight into character that would now be called, by fashionable scholars, psychohistory. Forced by the syllabus to devote one lecture to the financial policies of the revolutionaries, the inflation and the *assignats*, he read his notes from cards, and halfway through that lecture, he paused, yawning, and said, "Gentlemen, I don't see how you can stay awake listening to this, I'm falling asleep myself, but money is always important"—and went on.

A magnificent teacher, whose importance in historiography was unknown to me, was a man named Abbott Payson Usher. Usher taught economic history, but with such infectious enthusiasm, with such a waggle of his jaw, with such salivating eloquence, that he shook all my adolescent Marxism. Here, ran the story of Usher's course, was the way men made things and traded things; and history rests on how they manage the manufacture and exchange of goods. He took the Connecticut valley and explained how the Yankee tinkerers there invented mass production, interchangeable parts, and the American system of production. He traced on a map the coal beds that undervein Europe from England's Midlands, to France's North Country, to Germany's Ruhr and Silesia, demonstrating how one could track the development of political power in Europe by following the veins of energy and the times when coaling was first developed in each country. He taught about rivers, and how all the great cities of the world grew up at the mouths or fording places of rivers—London, New York, Paris, Rome.

His course was basic introductory material for any reporter who would later write about the Marshall Plan. And in *Fire in the Ashes*, a book I wrote on European recovery, many years later, I plagiarized what I remembered of Abbott Payson Usher's lectures shamelessly. His course simply took all my previous ideas, shook them apart gently, then taught me how facts and large affairs arrange themselves in connections that made history seem like intellectual detective work.

Yet the teacher who, more than any other, spun me off into history as a life calling was a young man who arrived at Harvard only at the beginning of my junior year: John King Fairbank, later to become the greatest historian of America's relations with China. Fairbank was then only twenty-nine—tall, burly, sandy-haired, a prairie boy from South Dakota; soft-spoken, with an unsettling conversational gift of delayed-action humor; and a painstaking drillmaster. He had himself graduated from Harvard in 1929, but on his way back to the Yard had made a circuitous route via Oxford and Peking to become a specialist in modern Chinese history. He had a freshly minted Ph.D. and was on trial at Harvard both as a tutor and Orientalist; since I was the only undergraduate majoring in Chinese history and studies, I was assigned to him as tutee. No two young people could have come of more different backgrounds. The tutorial system at Harvard was then in its early years, exploring the idea that each young mind needs an older mind to guide it. Tutors at Harvard now are usually embittered graduate students, rarely, if ever, emotionally committed to the undergraduates they guide. But Fairbank approached me as if he were an apprentice Pygmalion, assigned a raw piece of ghetto stone to carve, sculpt, shape and polish. He yearned that I do well.

It was not only that I was invited to my first tea party at his home, learning to balance a teacup properly; nor that, by observation, I learned proper table manners at a properly set breakfast table in the little yellow cottage where he lived with his beautiful young wife, Wilma. It was his absolute devotion to forcing my mind to think that speeded the change in me. We would talk about China and he would tell me tales of life in Peking as chatter—but only after our work was done. He was insistent that I read. I spent six weeks plowing through St. Thomas Aquinas, which, he agreed, was useless, yet necessary for a professional historian's understanding. He would make the hardest work a joy, and his monthly assignments were written with a skill and personal attention that no tutor at Harvard, or anywhere else, today gives to his students. One of his assignment

memos, which I still treasure, shows how a great teacher goes about his calling.

WHEREAS [read his communication] it is not possible to live (long) without thinking, and not possible to live well without thinking well; and

It is not possible to think well without making *distinctions* between this and that, or heredity and environment, or cause and effect, or the group and the individual, or the law and the facts, or tactics and strategy, or rights and duties, or man and woman, or nominalism and realism, or communism and fascism, or collectivism and individualism, to say nothing of up and down, or backwards and forwards; and whereas

It is not possible to go very far in making distinctions without making use of *categories of thought*, such as a category of laws and a category of events, or a category of noumena and a category of phenomena, or a category of spirit and a category of matter; and whereas

It is not possible to think with critical power without being *critical* of the categories with which one is thinking; and

It is not possible to avoid receiving certain categories at an early age from the contemporary intellectual environment;—

THEREFORE—

Philosophy is a most *necessary* and *admirable* subject, and

You are cordially invited to be present at a meeting on Friday, January 8, 1937, at which there will be a discussion of Whitehead's volume *Science and the Modern World* (entire) conducted by none other than Mr. Theodore H. White.

Thus I was introduced to Whitehead's philosophy as to myriad other ideas by Fairbank's loving and disciplined tutelage.

Yet, though he molded me, he was pursuing his own cause, too—which was understanding the revolution in Asia in our time. The fossil Sinologists of Harvard's Oriental Department felt that all Oriental history ended with the end of the Ch'ien-lung dynasty, in 1799. Professor Elisaeff, the department chief, insisted that everything after that date was journalism. Fairbank held otherwise—that history was happening now. He was probably the only man in all Cambridge who recognized that the Long March of Mao Tse-tung, the year before he himself joined Harvard's faculty, was epoch-making. Thus, then, in my senior year, young John Fairbank was allowed to teach a course—History 83b—on China from the death of Ch'ien-lung down to our times. It was a magnificent series of lectures, ground-breaking in intellectual patterns, and those few students who attended it caught the swell of what was happening in China and Asia from his wry, caustic, surgical stripping of myth from fact, noumena from phenomena, his separating Dr. Fu Manchu and *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* from what was really going on in China. His course reinforced what

my father had told me of China and what I felt by instinct. It inflamed my itch to be off, away and out—to China, where the story lay.

We differed, Fairbank and I, in an affectionate quarrel, over my senior thesis. I was shooting for fellowships and highest honors and I wanted to write about the delicate interaction of force and order. I wanted to take as my thesis subject the war lords of modern China and their brutalities over the thirty-year span of collapse of China's civil order. Fairbank insisted it was too broad a matter for a college senior to write about. I had become obsessed with force as the engine of history: who gathers the guns together at what point to hammer at the state or the enemy. Fairbank wrote back to my remonstrance a long letter on the causes of human action in man, saying that "force forces them at times, fear of force more often—and ideals still more often." He insisted that I display my knowledge of Chinese historiography by writing about the Twenty-One Demands of Japan on China in 1915 from Chinese bibliographical sources. This kind of scholarly paper, he pointed out, might get me a fellowship in the Harvard-Yenching Institute as a candidate for a doctorate. I set out to pursue this thesis in my senior year; and did so. This study of Japanese imperialism may have been, in a tiny way, useful to scholarship. But already, in my senior year, after two years with Fairbank, I knew I was leaving home.

I had come to Harvard as an adolescent Socialist and Zionist. I had helped organize the student Zionist activists on the New England campuses in what was called the Avukah (Torch) Society. I had helped organize a boycott of German goods in Boston, and been driven off by the cops for picketing Woolworth's. But somewhere between my junior and senior years, I had been lured to other interests. Harvard and History had intervened. So many other things were happening: The Japanese had begun their war on China in the summer of 1937, and were shattering Chinese resistance everywhere. Hitler was persecuting Jews. The Spanish Civil War was in its second year, and campus liberals were all engaged. What upset me most, the proximate cause of changed orientation, as Fairbank would have called it, was the siege of Toledo. Loyalists there outnumbered the Fascists; they had more men, but they were badly commanded. The Fascists held on to the Alcázar; Toledo had been lost; and men of good will had been defeated because they did not know *how* to fight. If we were to face Fascism—and we could sense a war coming—all of us should know *how* to fight.

Thus, very consciously, I knew I was separating from my Socialist and Zionist friends on the Harvard campus when I went into the yellow frame building, which now houses the Harvard Alumni Associ-

ation, to apply to Colonel Harris of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and ask whether I could, as a senior, join the ROTC. Colonel Harris was stern. I was a minor campus radical. Such radicals had rolled toilet paper down the steps of Widener Library when the West Point cadets came to visit, had brandished signs calling for "Scholarships Not Battleships" to protest Roosevelt's naval rearmament program. But I explained to Harris how I had changed my mind and wanted to learn how to be an officer. The colonel said that it was impossible to join the ROTC in the senior year and qualify for a commission. But he would let me audit the course, without credit; and he also let me join the unit in exercises.

The Harvard unit was a field artillery unit, which drilled with its horses in the armory in Boston. I had never touched a horse in my life, except for peddlers' cart horses on Erie Street. At my first muster in the armory, they presented me with a huge horse and played the Hoot Gibson comic Western trick on me. I stood at the right side of the horse, put my left foot in the stirrup, swung myself up to the saddle—and found myself facing the horse's tail. The ROTC students howled with laughter, and I was humiliated looking out at their laughing faces over a horse's behind. But then they did teach me how to mount correctly, and I attended the lectures on military strategy. What I most retained of my one year with the ROTC was this knowledge of how to mount, speed or slow a horse—which, when I was riding with Communist guerrilla units behind Japanese lines in China two years later, proved to be the most valuable practical skill I learned at Harvard. Some forty years later, as an Overseer at Harvard, I vehemently and fruitlessly protested the abolition of Harvard's ROTC unit as authority yielded to campus violence. Then, with only one other Overseer, I presented myself for the commissioning of the last of Harvard's contribution to the ROTC. All wars, by 1969, had become abhorrent to Harvard's undergraduates. We, in 1937, lived in a different time and knew we would have to learn to fight.

But that is to get ahead of the story. My senior year passed pleasantly enough. I was reading Chinese, steeping myself in history, writing about the Twenty-One Demands, slowly swinging in my politics from Socialist to hushed approval of Roosevelt's New Deal, concealing from friends that I was participating in ROTC exercises.

Graduation in 1938 was a pleasant June day. My mother and my sister came in by streetcar and subway to watch me graduate, and found nothing at all noteworthy in the program's statement that I had graduated summa cum laude under the rubric "*Qui adsecuti sunt*

summos honores." That was what they had expected since I had entered the Boston Latin School. I left at noon, not staying to hear the commencement address by John Buchan, Baron Tweedsmuir. I was very hastily off that afternoon—by bus to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where they were giving a special summer course in reading Chinese newspapers, then back to Boston, then in a hurry to go to China.

Everything had come together in those last few months at Harvard.

In my own mind I was a revolutionary; but in reality I was the creature of other people, of another past, beneficiary of all the Establishment had packed into the Harvard processing system. My summa cum laude degree had won me a $1,200 fellowship from the Harvard-Yenching Institute. I could take that up, when I chose, and start on the long run of becoming a professor of Oriental history. But there was another surprise gift from the Establishment, which came in my last month at Harvard, something called the Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship.

The Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship was most important. Sheldon was a childless New England bibliophile who had graduated Harvard almost a hundred years before. When his widow died in 1908, she had bequeathed in his name half a million dollars for fellowships to let "students of promise" travel for a year as fancy took them. As it was explained to me, it was an invitation to spend a year traveling outside the United States, with no obligation either to study or work in the year of wandering.

The grant was $1,500—a fortune. For $600 (actually $595.27), I found, I could buy a series of tickets that would take me around the world: by U.S. President Lines to London, thence to Paris, thence to Marseilles; by Messageries Maritimes to Palestine, thence from Port Said to Hong Kong, then an economy passage from Hong Kong to San Francisco, and bus fare from San Francisco to Boston. This would leave $900 from the total. I could leave $600 of that behind for the family, as my contribution to the budget my mother and I had worked out—twenty dollars a week for eight months. There would still be $300 for me to eat, sleep and live on as I moved around the world to China. If I could not earn a living in China, if I could not earn enough to help my sister keep the family going back in Boston, I would have to come back and take up the route to my Oriental professorship.

A new thought had also crept in in my senior year—the thought that I could, conceivably, write of history as a newspaperman. Both Charlie Duhig and John Fairbank thought I was not really and truly of

the stuff of scholarship. Without being specific, both implied that I had the manners, lust and ego of someone who might be a journalist. Fairbank had known Edgar Snow in China; and he thought I should try to do what Snow was doing.

So, then, with Establishment money in my pocket, and Harvard advice in my mind, I had begun to feel around the approaches to reporting. The Boston *Globe* was not then, as it is now, the best newspaper in Boston. But I was urged to try there before I went overseas. The name on the masthead that indicated "boss" was that of the managing editor, Laurence Winship, the father of its present editor, Thomas Winship. Larry Winship was a gruff man, but not frightening. In retrospect, he was the best of the old open-door newspaper editors. In his office on Boston's newspaper row, the Fleet Street of New England, he would, apparently, receive almost anyone—politicians, "cause" people, cranks, strangers, and Harvard seniors like myself. He gave me a brisk ten-minute hearing. I told him I was going to China, wanted to be a foreign correspondent and write for the Boston *Globe*. He listened, then said abruptly: All right. He could promise nothing except that he would read what I wrote if I mailed the copy to him personally; and if he liked what I wrote, he'd print it and pay for it. That was all, but he turned out to be as good as his word.

In the fall of 1938, then, I set out. I had a letter on stiff white Harvard stationery signed by James Bryant Conant, president of Harvard, recommending me to the good graces of the entire world as a Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellow of the university. Charles Duhig, custodian of the meatballs at Dudley Hall, had always been upset by my vulgarity of manners and had given me a stern lecture about the graces of the world I was entering ("You've got to learn to clean your fingernails, White!"); then, as a gift, he also gave me his father-in-law's worn-out tuxedo. If I wanted to be a foreign correspondent, he said, I would have to go to diplomatic receptions and I would need a black-tie suit. John Fairbank's gift was more practical—a secondhand typewriter. My relatives gave me secondhand clothes. I bought a new suitcase and I had two hundred dollars in traveler's checks plus one hundred dollars in greenbacks in my wallet to get me to China.

I left Boston on the weekend of the great New England hurricane of September 1938, and my mother and sister cried seeing me off at the old South Station. All the way down to New York on the New Haven Railroad, the shoreline was littered with the wreckage of the

hurricane; at New London, a huge ship's prow, blown on shore, hung within inches of the coach I was riding. It was a dramatic night. The next day I spent at the YMCA in New York and then boarded the SS *President Roosevelt* where, deep in the hold, above the throbbing engines, I shared a bunk with a young man whose name I still remember—Serafin Aliaga, a Spanish anarchist returning to fight Franco. Since the cause of the Republic was now hopeless, he said, he must therefore go back.

His sense of history was drawing him back to what must have been his death. My sense of history was drawing me outward, with no particular purpose of political passion. I hoped eventually to come back to Harvard. But first I must satisfy curiosity, my absolute lust to see what was happening in the China I had studied. How *did* history actually happen?

PART TWO

ASIA:
1938-1945

THE SIGHTSEER

Looking back now on the newly fledged college graduate leaving Boston, the storyteller could examine an almost comic figure. It was like squinting at something unrecognizable through the wrong end of a telescope. What the storyteller could see, looking back, was a bespectacled hustler, carrying one suitcase and a secondhand typewriter, about to round the world before coming home to be a professor of history—a prototypical juvenile sightseer.

That young sightseer had already been for years, and was to remain, a compulsive notetaker and diarist; and the diaries of his swift passage from Harvard to China are the only way to reconstruct the trajectory on which he was squirted out of one world into another completely different.

The sightseer came of two entirely different traditions: that of the Jews and that of the New England institutions that had set him on the road.

He was still reflexively Jewish as he set out from Boston in 1938. He had not knowingly until then ever eaten lobster, clams, pork, ham or other conspicuously nonkosher food. At breakfasts with his tutor he had tried to push the bacon to the side of the eggs and hide it under the toast. He was also puritanically Jewish in the old social tradition. Neither he, nor any of his friends at Harvard—*not one*—had ever known a woman sexually before he graduated. In the old Jewish tradition, sex came only *after* marriage; no more than kissing was permitted until then; and then that was daring.

But he was also Bostonian. From the time Boston's Judge Baker Foundation, a vocational guidance center, had told his mother that her boy was very bright and tested in aptitudes best to be an electrical engineer, he had been pulled and tugged from the

ancestral base by Boston good will. Boston good will had brought him the Burroughs Newsboys scholarship; had brought him other scholarships at Harvard; had finally graced him with this Sheldon Traveling Fellowship. If the founders and testators of such institutions and bequests had, with calculation, proposed to lure promising youngsters up into the Establishment, they could not have succeeded better than in first training this sightseer, then setting him on the road out of his origins.

The diaries of the swift journey started very personally, and changed swiftly, within weeks. The diary notes begin almost totally concerned with three matters. With money first—records of bus fares, taxi tips, waiters' tips, arguments about hotel bills. With sex next—the sightseer entertained an athletic fantasy life about sex, and being on the road, meeting strange people, stimulated his sex fantasies. Lastly, politics—page after page of amateur attempts to stretch Harvard history courses over what he saw as he traveled. But what he was seeing then, in the fall–winter of 1938–1939, he would understand only later.

His passage through Europe was brief and did little to deepen understanding. Europe was there exactly as described in the newspapers and textbooks. The Munich crisis had just come and gone, but in October of 1938, gas masks were still being distributed in London, and the air raid trenches in Hyde Park were fresh-cut. Paris was as beautiful as Professor Brinton had described; and from Paris he was off to visit the land of his ancestors, Palestine.

There were, then, perhaps 450,000 Jews in what was later to become Israel, and already the Arabs and Jews were at each other's throats. A Harvard companion in the Avukah Society, Emmanuel Labes, a gifted young violinist in the Harvard orchestra, had preceded him to Palestine by a year. The sight of Labes, a year ahead of the new voyager, was startling. Labes had chosen commitment to a cause. He worked in a settlement growing oranges, drove the horse that collected the crates of harvest; his violinist's hands were horny with peasant work; he was bare-boned with exhaustion from his work in the fields. But Labes wanted to make an Israel and was learning to use a gun.

Everyone in Palestine seemed overworked, overstrained, hacking away at dry rock to make fields, eating groats and coarse bread, learning to grow vegetables and fruit, but all of them ready to fight for the idea that had gathered them. Pioneers manned mountaintops outside kibbutzim, learning by experience that they must hold the

high ground, just as Colonel Harris had directed his ROTC cadets. When the young political sightseer took a four-mile walk in the countryside one day, he was greeted, on his return to a settlement, with genuine indignation; he had worried them and caused an alert. Arabs killed individual Jews walking unarmed on that road. Over this kettle of hatred the British watched with a garrison of sixteen thousand men, not basically anti-Semitic, but generally pro-Arab, disturbed because of the killings, and troubled because the Jews were unsettling this drowsy corner of their empire. "You Jews are simply a bloody nuisance," a young British officer told the Harvard sightseer.

The conflict of Arab and Jews, however, made a story, which, it seemed to the sightseer, would last for more than several weeks—it would last at least long enough to send a "mailer" to Mr. Winship, who might print it in the Boston *Globe.* Winship was to buy the story, but Theodore H. White was not to know that he had won his first by-line until he arrived in Hong Kong months later, to find a clipping of his story from the Boston *Globe* and a check for eight dollars. Eight dollars was important, but the clipping was more so. With the clipping he would be able to claim in Shanghai that he was the Far Eastern correspondent of the Boston *Globe,* stretching the single clipping as a credential much farther than Winship ever knew.

From Palestine, off to Asia on a Norwegian freighter, the M.V. *Tarn.* That leg of passage vividly illustrated what he had been taught of Western imperialism. The freighter touched at every dot on the map that marked the sweep of the British Empire, which was then at the fading apogee of its orbit. Port Sudan. Aden. Colombo. Singapore. Somewhere, perhaps in the colonial office, there was a modular design for colonial ports; each had its neat concrete piers, with single-track rail lines running down to wharfside, from which cranes ladled cargo in and out. There were native variations of locality: Sudan unloaded its cargo with Africans, Aden with Arabs, Ceylon with Tamils, whose long black hair fell in tresses down their backs. Ceylon was tea. A blue neon sign shone at night at the passenger terminal: "Ceylon for Good Tea." Singapore unloaded with Chinese. But everywhere the ship touched, the British ruled. When the sightseer went to the post office in Singapore, he stood in line to post a letter, not noticing that Chinese, Malays, Indians, all stood in the same line. He was pulled out of that line by a white lady, who sternly said, "White people go to the head of the line." It was as if he had been caught riding the back of the bus in the old South. At

each port of touch, all around the rim of Asia, white people strode to the head of the line, and the "natives" yielded.

Shanghai was the unrivaled Paris of imperialism, exactly as the textbooks predicted it would be. For a few months, the sightseer made Shanghai his base as he alternately declared himself to be a Sheldon Fellow of Harvard and the correspondent of the Boston *Globe*. From Shanghai he traveled to Tientsin and Peking; and poked his way into Japanese Army press conferences to hear a military spokesman announce each afternoon that the war in China was over, the Imperial Army was now mopping up. The sightseer wormed his way shamelessly into the Japanese spokesman's good graces, persuaded him that the Boston *Globe's* special correspondent should be given a pass to travel in Manchuria. But always, in those first few months, he wheeled out and back to Shanghai.

Shanghai was where the jobs were. Scores of American reporters in the thirties, tired of homeside jobs, were caught by word-of-mouth accounts of Paris or of Shanghai. In both cities, English-language newspapers hired unknown floaters like, say, Eric Sevareid or Edgar Snow. So there were too many experienced American reporters scratching coolie wages out of Shanghai's three English-language newspapers for them to take on yet another.

Some days the sightseer drifted; some days he spent pounding his typewriter in his room at the Shanghai YMCA; other days he shoved himself into unwelcoming offices looking for a job as reporter, writer, clerk, office boy. But he knew, after two months on the rim, that he wanted to stay in China and not go home to Boston to be a professor. For as he walked, or wandered, or rode the bus, or indulged in a rickshaw ride, he was seeing in this city of monsters and missionaries, of light and laughter, of gangsters and gardens, something unique. In this city of Chinese, ruled by white men, the despair at the bottom was as inconceivable to a poor boy from Boston as the delights of depravity at the top were inconceivable to Brahmins of Boston.

The British had set up their trading post in Shanghai in 1843. By 1939, Shanghai was the largest city in China, yet not really a city. Three million Chinese lived under the jurisdiction of the Shanghai Municipal Council, the expression of British-American-Japanese consular authority. The French concession, adjacent, was governed by Frenchmen in haughty independence. But the Chinese of Shanghai were people who were not people; their laws, courts, police, were all imposed by foreigners from thousands of miles away. Shanghai was an open city—cabarets, opium dens, bawdyhouses,

Blood Alley, the waterfront, gangsters. The sightseer visited the bawdyhouses but did not touch the girls. He drank at night with other jobless newsmen. The city tingled; he tingled with it; and the city tingled thus in the sightseer's memory as Sin City until 1972. Then, visiting it with Richard Nixon, he recognized that it was not the dirty gray buildings, the hulks and skyline of its famous Bund which had given it enchantment, but the long-vanished contrasts of sybarite pleasure and wordless sorrows. Under Communism, Shanghai had become a tenement city without pleasure or panic.

The sightseer's diary marked a day in Shanghai when he was first tempted to stop sightseeing. It was a day's tour of Shanghai's factories. No one then cared about Chinese workingmen, least of all the Chinese rich; but some reflex twitch of morality in the Anglo-American overlordship of the city had caused the Municipal Council to appoint a nominal factory-inspection system. One of the inspectors, a young Dane named Chris Bojessen, hated his job because it was more than his emotions could absorb. Bojessen wished to shriek and took the young political sightseer with him one day on his daily rounds, hoping White could write a story.

Together they made the tour of the factories. There was the glass vacuum bottle factory—the little boys at work there were ten or eleven years old; they wore wooden clogs as they tramped over the splintered bottles, which they dumped into the vats where the glass was melted fresh. They made the next visit at a textile factory—Bojessen poked with his toe to show a cylinder of bamboo mat in the dump of factory garbage by the canal. In the mat was wrapped the body of a little girl, a factory worker; two or three such mats were put out each night to be collected with the garbage. Next stop was a silk filature, an overheated, steaming loft—there the little girls were six or seven years old, and their duty was to stand all day long over the steaming tubs of hot water in which the silk cocoons were dissolved; they had to pick out the silk thread which unwound the cocoon and fix it to a tiny hook. A job any child could do—except that Bojessen led the sightseer down the line and gently pulled the hands of the little girls out of the tubs and showed how the joints of each hand, where the fingers joined the palm, were rotting. The skin blistered away, the flesh was open and festered with eczema. Such children, Bojessen said, were bought from peasant parents in the countryside; these little girls would die, like the little girls in the textile factory; and also be rolled in bamboo mats to be carried away as refuse. The sightseer thought that made a story, but when he wrote it no one bought that story, not even the Boston *Globe*.

The sightseer was, at this point, being shaken in his posture as roving observer, and the diaries record him as deciding he must join the action, as a revolutionary, a partisan, an agitator, whatever. But the most radical group he met in his few months in Shanghai was a group of Trotskyites, all white men and drifters; they threw him out of their group almost immediately; the one he admired most told the sightseer, "White, you're nothing but a goddamn Socialist and you ought to know it."

So he sought other ways to join the action—and the largest action going in Asia was, without doubt, the war of the Japanese against the Chinese, with the Nationalist government of Chiang K'ai-shek somewhere way, way off to the west, landlocked beyond the mountains and gorges. That war, too, was part of the front against the Fascists, as was the war of the Loyalists in Spain. He made contact with the agents of Chiang K'ai-shek, and offered them his help. But he could not stay too long in Shanghai, for his money was running out. His plan called for him to be moving back to Boston, but first he wanted to see the inside of China.

The sightseer bought a ticket on a British passenger steamer from Shanghai to Hanoi. From Hanoi, he planned to travel up the French railway to Kunming; from Kunming he might find his way to Chungking, the mountain lair of Chiang K'ai-shek—then it would have to be back to Boston, quickly, before the Sheldon Fellowship money ran out.

A Butterfield & Swire ship carried him out of Shanghai in second class, with the wives of British noncommissioned officers being shipped from one outpost on the perimeter of empire to another. There was no third class: that was coolie class, deck class. But he enjoyed second class with the plain Englishwomen of thick girth and no style. He liked them because they hated Hitler. "A proper Bolshie, he is," said one of the soldiers' ladies, whose politics were confused, but whose loyalties were perfect. And they loved England. "We love our King and Queen and our royal family," explained another, as if affirming her religion and faith in God. Solid-bottomed ladies, with solid-bottomed loyalties, they added to the sightseer's ineradicable affection for the British, which persisted long after he recognized, years later, that the British had lost their greatness when they came to despise such simple ladies, whose men had made Britain great.

The sightseer arrived in Hong Kong in the afternoon, en route to Hanoi; he left the ship next morning to scout the job market at

British newspapers in Hong Kong. It must have been eleven o'clock when he wandered into the office of the Chinese Republic's Information Service, with whose agents he had already been in contact in Shanghai.

They were waiting for him. The message they must have received could only have been extravagantly garbled. He was received as a "newspaperman" from Boston, who had studied Chinese at Harvard, and was now a fellow of the university—and willing to serve the Chungking government! In Chungking, the propaganda service was about to lose an Australian newspaperman who supervised a six-man staff of Chinese feature writers pumping out stories to feed the American and British press. Could the sightseer leave immediately for Chungking and inland China? They meant *immediately*—like the day after tomorrow, when there would be a night flight over the Japanese lines to the wartime capital in the interior. Could he?

He could. He was back at the boat in no time, packed his bags, argued with the purser for reimbursement of the unused portion of his ticket to Hanoi, was paid for it in cash, found a hotel room for that night and the next day. The sightseer's diary recorded the night's thoughts. Should he serve as a propagandist for a foreign government? Was this a way to help with the war against Fascism? Would the job forever disbar him from American journalism? Should he ask the American consulate for permission? Where would it take him?

But the night's self-searching was both irrelevant and hypocritical. He had already agreed to take the job. He would be part of a war as soon as the plane took off. He would see bombings, for Chungking was certain to be target number one for the Japanese Air Force. Whatever history was all about, he would be part of it, for he would be inside the Chinese "government."

It was the first plane flight he ever took; late on a Friday evening he stood in line to board a Chinese Junkers plane, which trundled down the runway of Kaitak Airport, seemed certain to hit the surrounding mountains, then rose in the air, leaving behind the blue and red and white lights that made bracelets about Hong Kong's peak, and was off into dark China, where no lights shone at night.

He was being flown into one of the greatest upheavals of the twentieth century, and quickly, more quickly than he could possibly guess, the last ties to home, Boston, family and Harvard were to be snapped. Even the eye of a fresh-minted college graduate would not fail to find startling what he was about to see.

CHAPTER TWO

CHINA: WAR AND RESISTANCE

I arrived in Chungking on April 10, 1939, landing in the Yangtze River.

I looked about. The runway was a sandbar paved with stone, and on both sides of the sandbar the river rushed by, yellow and muddy, carrying the silt of Inner Asia down to the ocean beyond the gorges below. The airstrip was usable only from winter through spring, when the river ran low; in summer and early fall, swollen with the melting snows of Tibet, the river flooded the airport. A footbridge now led across an eddy of the river to the foot of a gray cliff, and there, high above the cliff, ran the city wall of old Chungking.

The pilot hurried us out, reloaded the plane with waiting passengers, then roared away at once before any marauding Japanese overflight might discover his plane on the ground and destroy it.

I was at last in a country at war, in its capital fourteen hundred miles from the sea, up the Yangtze River, four hundred miles beyond the Japanese lines.

Sedan-chair bearers were called to carry me up the hundreds of steps carved into the cliff wall, and I was swung aboard a hammock of bamboo slats hung between two poles, a front bearer and rear bearer yoked to the poles. It was the first time I had seen men used this way, as beasts of burden, and I remember noticing the brown calluses, thicker than leather, on the bare shoulders of the lead carrier as he sweated his way up. "*A-ya-zillah, a-ya-zillah,*" he chanted in singsong at each step, and the rear bearer responded with the same "*a-ya-zillah, a-ya-zillah,*" as he lurched, heaving, up one step at a time. Up the cliff, up the road, into the city wall of Chungking, and I was in another world.

The city itself for the first weeks held my attention more than my job or my ambitions.

Marco Polo had written of cities like this when he visited the province of Szechwan almost seven hundred years earlier, and by rolling back the thin veneer of the twentieth century that overlay Chungking, I might have been again in his Cathay. Let me linger over what I could see, for it was the beginning of the story of China I was to learn:

The city sat on a wedge of cliffs, squeezed together by the Chialing and Yangtze rivers, which joined flow at the tip of the wedge. The city wall, with its nine gates, had been built in the Ming dynasty, over five hundred years earlier. Much of the wall had been torn down for building material a few years before I got there, but its nine gates still stood and one of them still functioned; its huge brass-knobbed beams swung shut at sunset, opened at dawn. The gate that had opened for the imperial cart road—the T'ung-yüan Men, the "Gate Connecting with Distant Places"—was now pierced for a motor road. This motor road, the "old" road, was twelve years old; until 1928 Chungking had boasted no wheeled vehicles, no autos, no rickshaws, not even wheelbarrows. The "new" motor road, circling the south rim of the wall, had been opened only the year I arrived. Sedan chairs, with their bearers, outnumbered rickshaws, with their pullers, three thousand to two thousand.

Neither road had yet significantly changed life in the city, and Chungking was still attached umbilically, as it had been forever, to the countryside. Rice paddy fields reached up to the city wall itself; down below on the fringes of the Yangtze's banks, peasants hopefully planted vegetables, gambling they could harvest before the summer floods overran their plots. As far as the eye could see, on both sides of the Yangtze, on both sides of the Chialing, the crescent paddy fields stretched to the hills, then in terraces over the hills, to the next ridge of hills, on and on to the great walled city of Ch'eng-tu, 275 miles away, and beyond that more paddy fields until the Tibetan escarpment forbade the peasants to try farther.

Inside the wall was a China I had never heard of. Flowers, for example. No one had ever told me how much the Chinese love flowers—but now, in springtime, there were more flower stalls than in my native Boston. In semitropical Szechwan, the flowers, it seemed, forgot to blossom by the season. Paper-white narcissi (*shui-hsien*) came in midwinter; plum blossoms spotted the hills and decorated the markets in March; azaleas bloomed all year round, and the stalls offered little pots of flowering shrubs, which lit the dingy, shadow-dark alleys around the calendar. Then, fruits: tiny orange cherries, sticky sweet, in baskets, as early as May; followed by peaches in

June—huge yellow-skinned red-fleshed peaches, the best in all China except for those of Shantung; then the apricots and the lichee nuts of midsummer, followed by the watermelons of August and September; followed again by pears; by the red and rosy persimmons of late fall; to be overwhelmed finally by the magnificent citrus fruits of winter—pink pomelos, oranges and, at their glorious best, the tangerines of December. In a few years, I, like most Chinese in Chungking, learned to mark the rhythm of the seasons by the fruits.

Flowers and fruits gave the visual rhythm. But the real flow, the continuing beat of the city, connected it to the fields of rice where fifty million peasants in China's richest province, Szechwan, filled the granary of China at war. Rice came down from upriver in flat-bottomed scows, was shoveled into sacks, was shipped off now in wartime to the fronts instead of to the cities of the coast, where it had gone before. The richest of the rich in Chungking were the rice merchants and landlords of rice fields. Meat came from the countryside, as it always had. Pigs were carried in every morning to the city, four legs trussed over a pole carried by two coolies, the eyelids of the pig sewn shut, the pig squealing in agony until it reached the slaughtering place. And then it reappeared as fat slabs of red meat, oozing blood on butchers' counters; or as fly-blown gobbets of gray pork; or as yards-long black-and-brown dust-coated dry sausages hanging from hooks in open stalls, from which the meat merchant would sell from an inch to two feet to any customer. The city repaid the countryside by returning all its bowel movements; collectors emptied the thunder boxes of every home each morning, and padded barefoot down the alley stairs to the riverside, two buckets of liquid muck jiggling from their bamboo staves, until they reached what foreigners delicately styled the "honey barges." There, they emptied the excrement into the barges, where rivermen, entirely naked, stirred the muck around at a collection point famous for its stench. From that point, Chungking's gift to the fields was carried upriver to be sold to peasants as fertilizer. From the same river the water-bearers carried up buckets of muddy water, jiggling on the same kind of staves as the honey buckets, to all the homes that could not be reached by Chungking's new, but minimal, piped water supply. The sloshings on the stone steps, up and down the alleys, left them always slippery, and one could never be sure what kind of slime one must avoid.

From the one main motor road in the city, on the crest of the ridge, one descended, as if through centuries, to the past. This main road had the façade of a coastal city; its stores sold bolts of cloth,

flashlights, auto parts and canned foods, advertised in neon; its peddlers sold needles, thread, vacuum bottles, imports from downriver. But from the road, the alleys slipped down into darkness. Chungking was always foggy, except for the clear, midsummer bombing months. The alleys were always shadowed, and some were so narrow that a passer could catch the drip from the eaves on both sides with his umbrella. They offered a symphony of smells, fragrant and stinking at the same time—fragrant with the smell of food and spice, the aroma of flowers, roasting chestnuts, incense, the sweetness of opium, yet stinking of uncollected garbage and the urine that ran in the gutters. The noises were a symphony of another kind—of yelling men, screaming women, bawling babies, and squawking hens, which lived with the families in the huts. To which was added the singsong chants of the coolies carrying their buckets or the peddlers carrying wares. Each activity had its own sound. The timbermen, swinging their logs, bellowed. The peddler of cottons announced his journey by clacking rhythmically on a wooden block. The notions dealer carried all his wares in one great black box and sang his wares with his own particular chant, as the banana man and the fish peddler had on Erie Street. The night-soil collectors gave out a warning chant peculiar to them. So, too, did the brassware man, who sold cat's bells, knives, toothpicks, ear cleaners, back scratchers, all dangling from a long pole, twirling as in a Calder mobile.

The people in these alleys lived as they always had, responding sluggishly to the changing times, wrinkling their habits as an animal wrinkles its hide and stirs at a prod. A few had learned to visit the three missionary clinics that had been established in the town. But most, when they were ill, visited the herb doctor or the acupuncture man, and sought medicines unheard of in the West—moldy bean curd for sore throats, potions of baby urine, powders ground from crystals of musk or rhinoceros horn. They bought their virility and fertility aids, their backache and headache cures, their beauty aids and lotions in their own tradition, seeking the same elusive magic of life, love and comfort that television advertises with the same futility each day in America. On the ridge of the motor road were strung the electricity lines that lit the neon of the storefronts and the offices in which government had found shelter, but down in the alleys, homes were still lit by oil lamps and candles. Paraders bearing green leaves asked the gods for rain in time of drought; traditional marriage processions followed behind the red-draped bridal chair, cymbals clanging; at funerals, the people trooped in white, as they had for millennia,

behind the coffin—and sometimes on the body of the corpse mourners still tied a crowing cock to ward off evil spirits.

This Chungking, in the alleys and of the past, needed little of the kind of government of the coastal cities I had seen, where Westerners had planted outposts and seeded industry. Chungking's relation to the countryside was straightforward; its traditional government, though cruel, was simple. Local government policed an orderly place where merchants, moneychangers and shopkeepers could provide a market for the peasants of the valleys; government kept the peace. The merchants paid off to authority—to whomever had the spears, the soldiers, the guns, the power to keep the trading place functioning. Such people had paid their taxes to a millennial succession of imperial civil servants, to mandarins and viceroys and, more recently, to warlords. They might have paid off forever, living undisturbed by any but local predators, except for the war. Not Chungking, but China, as a nation, needed a new kind of government. And I had come to Chungking to serve the government that had only recently taken refuge there.

The national "government" of the Republic of China had set up its command post in this old city because it controlled the entry to the largest and richest province of China—Szechwan. Landlocked by mountains and gorges to the east, backed against the roof of Asia to the west, cupping the most fertile fields of the entire land, Szechwan was a semitropical inner empire of fifty million people, self-sufficient and all but impregnable. By spring of 1939, when I arrived, the Japanese Army had occupied all the cities of the coast—Shanghai, Canton, Tientsin, Peking—apparently all of North China, and all the cities of the Yangtze valley up to Hankow. West of Hankow, however, rose the impenetrable gorges; beyond the gorges, Chungking; and from this natural fortress the Nationalist resistance was to be directed for six full years.

Chungking had been a town of some 300,000 people before the war. A quarter of a million refugees, embodying the national government of the Republic, had arrived, fleeing from the Japanese, before I got to Chungking; another quarter million were to arrive before the war was over; and the strangers arriving to staff the government were as far from home as was this young man from Boston. They had grown up in the cities and universities of the China coast, accustomed to electric lights, flush toilets, sewage systems, buses, trolleys, newspapers, libraries; their wives were accustomed to kitchens, bathtubs, auto-

mobiles, movie houses, Western medicine. Chungking had few of these modernities. There was, for example, but one movie house, and in 1940 it was showing 1936 newsreels. So the refugees had been driven as far back into the past as into the interior, and the past exasperated them. It was as if the ablest and most devoted executives of New York, Boston and Washington had been driven from home to set up resistance to an enemy from the hills of Appalachia.

Chungking had been the capital of a self-regulating provincial society; now it had to be jolted into a new world. The forward echelon of the national government, as soon as it arrived, regarded the easygoing ways of the past it found there as wanting in discipline for the austere politics of wartime. Opium was banned at once, in late 1938. Four months before I arrived, the bathhouses were also banned—the famous bordellos where merchants might gather to dine and, between courses, dart in and out of the steaming tub rooms to be washed, scratched, oiled and serviced by the ladies of the establishment. Austerity was the theme of wartime reform—drinking of spirits was soon forbidden. The wastefulness of traditional marriage ceremonies was outlawed; later, an attempt was made to replace the lavish old funeral rites with the simpler ceremony of cremation. Rickshaws and sedan chairs were numbered and licensed. Even a campaign against spitting in the streets was undertaken. But none of the edicts, except that against opium, could be enforced in the old city, which gradually was smothered by the newcomers. The old city continued its old life, under the blanket of the new.

Heroic—that was my first impression of the people of this government in refuge. Any one of these thousands of civil servants might have remained behind on the occupied coast, as thousands of others did, servile to the conquering Japanese. But they would not. They would suffer the prickly heat of Chungking's torrid summer, the moist and chilling cold of winter in unheated rooms; they would see their children sicken and often die—but they would not submit.

Not only government officials chose the way of resistance. So did thousands of university students and their professors, taking refuge in makeshift college grounds for miles around Chungking. So did many small merchants of the coast, who came not to get rich but out of sheer pride of nationhood, the stubbornness of wanting to be Chinese. After them came the marvelous cooks who would not remain behind to serve the enemy. By the end of the war, Chungking offered better food than I have since eaten in any other city in the world, except occasionally Paris and New York. From Fukien, Canton, Shanghai, Peking, Hupeh,

Hunan, arrived the fleeing chefs of great restaurants to display their mastery of table in every provincial variation.

I found all these people—government officials, scholars, soldiers, shopkeepers, restaurant men—historically romantic. And it is difficult to recall how easily they won admiration at that time when one looks back now. By the end of the war, when inflation had made their paper salaries worthless and thus made them corrupt, when American aid had separated the Nationalists from the countryside, when their private civil war with the Communists envenomed all their thinking, Chungking had become a city rotten to the core. But in the beginning, it was inspiring to visit officials whose children played on the steps of their government offices, whose wives hung the wet wash from the dormitory buildings to the office buildings, who ate in community messes, who drilled their children for the inevitable bombings that must come when the spring fogs lifted. Several sacks of rice and a bit of cooking oil was the official monthly ration. Entire families slept in one room in office dormitories, the room heated by a charcoal brazier in winter.

The newly arrived government had possessed itself of almost every hotel, semimodern office building, and school compound in Chungking and its neighborhood. Then it spread, as arrivals swelled, over the countryside—into shacks of bamboo wattles woven together, smeared with mud, then whitewashed.

Each morning, everywhere, opened with the mournful singing of the Nationalist anthem: "*San Min Chu I, wo tang so pao, i chien min kuo.*" When I tried to translate the song that woke us every morning, Western visitors would laugh at the comic-seriousness of the words: "Three peoples principles our party will defend, to build people democracy." But the music was as stirring as it was melancholy, and I thrilled to the sound. I thrilled, too, at evening when bugles would blow everywhere in the city as the Nationalist banners with their twelve-pointed star were lowered from the staffs.

It was not only their cause that captured me, but also the fact that they were, apparently, so very American.

No government in Asia, or anywhere else for that matter, was ever so completely penetrated by "Americanists" as was the Republican government in Chungking. And no government, except perhaps that of the Republic of South Vietnam, was so completely ruined by American ideas, aid and advice. The men and women of this government were, as a group, not so much conscripted by Americans as they were seekers for American ideas, American ways. The missionaries

had begun to disturb China's old ideas a half century before; mission colleges and schools had deepened American influence; and the upward mobile, the strivers, hungering for the modernization and westernization of China, sought American learning, technology, culture, as if America knew all the secrets of life.

The penetration started at the top, with Madame Chiang K'ai-shek, the Wellesley-educated wife of the Generalissimo, whom she had persuaded to become a Methodist. Chiang K'ai-shek's Minister of Finance was H. H. Kung, who had graduated from both Oberlin and Yale; his Minister of Foreign Affairs was Yale, 1904; his minister of Education was a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh; the legislative Yuan was presided over by Dr. Sun Fo, with degrees from Columbia and the University of California. The minister of Information was a graduate of the Missouri School of Journalism. The head of the Bank of China, T. V. Soong, later to be China's Prime Minister, was Harvard, class of 1915. The list of American-graduated Chinese in the government was endless—too long to count. It ran from the National Health Administrator to the Salt Administration to the Foreign Trade Commission. The ambassadorial list of China's foreign affairs was overwhelmingly Ivy League; in Washington, a Cornell-Columbia graduate; in London, a University of Pennsylvania man; in Paris, Wellington Koo, who had not only graduated from Columbia with three degrees but had edited its college newspaper and was now proud that his son had made the staff of the *Crimson* at Harvard. My Harvard degree carried me farther than it would have in Boston. Later, I organized a Harvard Club of China, which included a larger proportion of the high officials of Chiang K'ai-shek's government in Chungking than a Harvard Club would have in John F. Kennedy's Washington.

In retrospect, of course, all this was tragedy. It took me over a year to discover that any high Chinese official of the "national" government who spoke good English was so separated from his own people, and his understanding of his own people—his understanding, even, of the old city of Chungking—as to make him useless to me in trying to find out what was going on in China. Such people lived, dreamed, thought, spoke to each other in English—all except Chiang K'ai-shek.

Chiang was a Chinese Chinese of the real government. He was a man I learned first to respect and admire, then to pity, then to despise. Chiang spoke no English, read no English, had come of a peasant family poorer even than Mao Tse-tung's. The Americanists whom

Chiang chose to man the façade of his government were, in retrospect, like the panel of a modern electronic system. When one pushed buttons, lights winked. But the wires in back led nowhere, the switchboard did not connect to the operations system. And the parade of American advisers, aid masters and generals who were later to come to help all exploded in impotent fury when they finally realized the switchboard did not work. Only a few Americans were admitted to Chiang's presence. Most would be shown the rock wall of Chiang's compound; two sentries guarded the entrance, a curving road ran up the hill, then twisted away. Where it disappeared was where the other "government" of China began—the "government" that controlled the armies of the front, made the necessary alliances with warlords, reached down through the few modern highways to the villages, towns, the *pao-chia* system, which was where real government began.

Few Americans understood that other "government" of China, which began where the Americanized Chinese officials reached the limit of their authority. But few Chinese understood the American system which furnished them with advisers, either. Chiang invited such advisers to help his government because he thought Americans possessed some magic, some technology which could artificially be grafted onto his system without altering it.

The American advisory system in China was to be a thing of wonder years later. And in the thirty-five years since, I have seen American advisers and spies spread like a presence around the world, saving some nations, ruining others. But Chungking was the starting place for my tour of observation.

Briefly, that first summer, I was invited to join a dinner mess of American advisers, who gathered at the Methodist mission each evening for an American meal. Senior among them was a taciturn and courtly aviation adviser named Colonel Claire Chennault, U.S. Army Air Corps, retired. He was trying to reorganize the Chinese air force. Chennault would never take shelter in an air raid, but would study the Japanese formations as they came over, as a football coach studies films of a team he expects soon to meet in the field. He recognized the Japanese Zero for what it was—a highly maneuverable but underpowered plane, inaccurate in its fire. He figured that the new American P-40, with its platform-mounted gun, had the advantages of height, accuracy and speed. If it came to war, the American tactic should be to hold the height above the Japanese Zero, and then make one passing, striking swoop from above. Later, his tactic was proved

correct. There was a civilian aviation adviser, William Langhorne Bond. He taught me how to recognize the shrill of a bomb from the air, and more importantly, how to sight on an enemy plane: if you stood behind a telephone pole and the plane seemed to climb directly up the pole in the sky beyond, head for the shelter; if it diverged from the pole sighting, the bomb wasn't going to hit you. There were financial advisers at the mess; they spoke very gravely about central banking and taxation and relayed such advice to Chiang K'ai-shek. My distrust of economists was probably born then: they taught the Chinese about modern central banking and how central banks could print money; which the Chinese government proceeded to do with great enthusiasm until paper money became entirely worthless. It was like teaching an adolescent how to shoot heroin.

By all odds, the most amusing of the American advisory corps was a man who called himself "Osborne," who purported to be a merchant of leather and hides. "Osborne" was a delightful man. His real name was Herbert O. Yardley, and he was the creator and founder of the American cryptographic and code-cracking services in World War I, which have since developed into the National Intelligence Agency. Long before there was an OSS, even longer before there was a CIA, Osborne-Yardley was acting for us in Chungking, intercepting Japanese radio messages, cracking them for codes, serving Chiang K'ai-shek as a technician, getting the U.S. Navy ready for the code crackings of World War II.*

"Osborne" took a fancy to me. He was a man of broad humor and unrestrained enthusiasms, and among his enthusiasms were drink, gambling and women. He decided after we had become friends that he should teach me poker, which he did by letting me stand over his shoulder and watch him unfold his hands and sweep up the pots. He also felt I should be taught sex, and tried to persuade me to sample that experience by inviting some of the choicest ladies he knew to a banquet in his house. I would not learn; Boston was still strong in me. But he did teach me something more important than anything I have

*Yardley was a professional code breaker. His most important book, *The American Black Chamber*, was a pioneer work in the long sequence of American secret agents who have since then gone public. *The American Black Chamber* told of American code cracking in World War I. Yardley told the story better in person than in print, but his reason for going public was impeccable. He had been fired when the noble Henry Stimson became Secretary of State. Stimson was dismayed to learn that Americans read and code-cracked the cables of foreign embassies with whom we negotiated. "Gentlemen don't read other people's mail," Stimson is reputed to have said in getting rid of Yardley's Black Chamber. Much more worthwhile of Yardley's literary output is his twilight book, *The Education of a Poker Player*, Simon & Schuster, 1957. This major contribution to the American folk culture is as important in the education of the young to poker playing as a sex manual is to a college freshman.

learned since from any official American adviser or wise man: how to behave in an air raid. Yardley's theory was that if a direct hit landed on you, nothing would save you. The chief danger of an air raid, he said, was splintered glass from windows. Thus, when one hears the siren, one should get a drink, lie down on a couch and put two pillows over oneself—one pillow over the eyes and the other over the groin. Splintered glass could hurt those vital organs, and if the eyes or the groin were injured, life was not worth living. It was good advice for any groundling in the age before atom bombs; and I took it. Yardley was excessively kind to me, as were so many older men in Chiang K'ai-shek's Chungking.

I was thus, among American advisers to the Chinese government, the lowest man in the hierarchy, so low as to be almost imperceptible. Twenty-three years old, fresh from the Ivy League—which was accepted as fresh from the cathedral seminary by the Americanized Chinese government—totally inexperienced, I was titled Adviser to the Chinese Ministry of Information. In this job I was a thorough failure. I did not understand the job. No one could explain it to me. I thought of myself in the stiff Socialist rhetoric of my youth as a "fighter against Fascism." But in reality, I was employed to manipulate American public opinion. The support of America against the Japanese was the government's one hope for survival; to sway the American press was critical. It was considered necessary to lie to it, to deceive it, to do anything to persuade America that the future of China and the United States ran together against Japan. That was the only war strategy of the Chinese government when I came to Chungking in 1939, and my job was to practice whatever deception was needed to implement the strategy.

Technically, I was supervisor of the news-feature stories of the "China Information Committee." I was paid four hundred Chinese dollars a month, worth at the then rate of exchange, sixty-five American dollars; but I was free to do my own free-lancing, for anything I could publish would serve the Chinese cause.

For the first few weeks I lived in a mission compound; then the expected bombings began and the mission was blasted out. After the bombings, I moved into a government dormitory on the downstairs floor of the information service office, where I slept with Chinese roommates and ate breakfast and lunch at their mess. Later, when the bombings flattened more and more of Chungking, the Ministry of Information built, in the back yard adjacent to it, a press hostel for

foreign correspondents, and I moved in with the press corps.

It took no more than a few weeks for everyone to discover that I was an amateur. The six Chinese news-feature writers whom I was supposed to supervise spoke English as well as I, they were all men between thirty and forty who had been reporters on the English-language newspapers of the coast, competent journeymen newspapermen who out of patriotism were serving their government for rice wages. And I, a boy of twenty-three, was supposed to direct and edit them. Moreover, I did not share their devotion to their government; their government was a mystery. I probed it critically; I tried to deliver to the American press corps what shreds of information I could gouge out of the government in which I worked. To me a good story was a good story, whether it was good propaganda or not, and my clients were the foreign newsmen, either resident in Chungking or passing through, who were starved for news.

These men were posted to cover a war, to file stories every day—but the war was hundreds of miles downriver; it took a week's journeying to get to the front, a week's journeying back. It was no simple tragedy that they were not allowed to cover the news; neither were the Chinese newspapermen, and no Chinese newspaper ever printed actualities. There was a quaint Chinese jargon one had to learn quickly in translating the war bulletins issued at midnight from the Ministry of War. The Japanese were never called Japanese, but were always referred to as the "dwarf bandits." In war bulletins, Japanese never "attacked," their armies "sneaked about" (the characters used in the phrase denoted the sneaking about of a robber at night). When the Japanese had seized Hankow, their climactic victory of 1938, the news was suppressed in Chungking for a week and then appeared as "traces of the enemy have appeared in Hankow." A Chinese retreat was always announced as an engagement of the army "in a major strategic outflanking movement." The loss of a new town or city to the Japanese was always first reported as "our forces have successfully entrapped the enemy" in whatever city had just fallen. And if a little victory did occur at the front, it always ended with the capture by Chinese forces of *"wu-ch'i pu suan"*—"war weapons to an incalculable amount."

This kind of news dismayed the foreign press. Some of the reporters could be controlled. The Associated Press was represented by a young Dane with a Chinese wife; Reuters by a Chinese bureau chief; others, too, had given hostages of loyalty to the Chinese government. These reported what the government put out. The two most difficult reporters to control were a young United Press correspondent, Robert

Martin, who wrote excellent verse when the mood took him; and F. Tillman Durdin of *The New York Times*, one of the greatest foreign correspondents ever to report Asia, a man of such integrity that even Chinese government officials flinched when they lied to him. Easiest of all to manipulate, however, were the famous names, the trained seals, the swooping stars of big American and British newspapers who would fly in for a four-day visit and then send out pontifical dispatches about the war and the Chinese spirit of resistance. It was with these I had my greatest luck in my brief career as a propagandist; one correspondent arrived in Chungking, was banqueted by the government the evening of his arrival, stayed drunk for his entire four-day visit, lurching from banquet to banquet, and let me, from my desk at the Information Committee, write all his dispatches.

I was demoted gracefully within a few weeks from editor; I was so good a writer, I was told, I should write news features myself. Not only did this "save face" all around, but it suited me better, and from my experience I learned much about the self-propelling life of legends, true and false.

The correspondents clamored at me, as an "insider" of the government, for real copy to pad out the unpronounceable monosyllabic place names that marked the military communiqués; the United Press bureau had to fill a minimal five-hundred-word cable budget every day; Reuters had to file two thousand words a day, whether there was news or not. I tried to meet their needs. A one-paragraph item in a Chinese newspaper caught my eye; somewhere in Chekiang province, then occupied by the Japanese, a Chinese woman named Tsai Huang-Hua had thrown a grenade into a theater attended by Japanese soldiers, killed several, and escaped alive. I translated the Chinese characters—"Huang-Hua"—of her name literally, and she became Miss "Golden Flowers" Tsai, the guerrilla chieftain, the Amazon leader of a band of Chinese resistants. I padded the story a bit, and it caught with the foreign reporters, all except Durdin. Their home offices demanded pictures to go with the story. My colleagues at the Information Service provided a photograph of a young Chinese woman in uniform, packing two pistols at her waist. She became the "Pistol-Packing Miss Golden Flowers." The reporters wanted more, and the Information Service provided more and more and more. For a few months, as I fed out the story, "Golden Flowers" Tsai became a heroine of the resistance, second only to Madame Chiang K'ai-shek herself. At the hands of rewrite men back in America, her exploits became legend. Three years later, long after I had left the service of

the Chinese government, the now defunct *American Weekly* gave her a full front-page spread. By then I was temporarily Far Eastern editor of *Time* magazine in New York and when it was suggested that *Time* pick up the story, I had to demur and confess my role as father of a fraud.

More serious was my effort to describe the vastness of the dislocation and tragedy, for that effort concerns the writing of history, and its interlock with journalism. I wrote much about refugees and their suffering. The National Relief Commission claimed it had statistics. I examined them: the records showed that in the fourteen months between the beginning of the Japanese invasion in 1937 and the fall of Hankow in 1938, the Commission had served in and out of the refugee camps some twenty-five million meals—the count came from the refugees who trudged twice a day through the rice-gruel and chow line at the temporary shelter camps. Their figure was twenty-five million *meals*—not *people*. By some garble in my own story, the figure was transmuted to the statistic that twenty-five million people had fled the Japanese invaders in the first years of Chinese resistance. The figure was cabled abroad, remained fixed in morgues, appeared in magazine articles, constantly appears and reappears in learned accounts of the China war. The figure has become part of history. I know now that no one will ever know how deep and far-flung was the dislocation of the Japanese invasion. It may have been two million or five million Chinese who fled rather than submit. But the twenty-five million figure remains locked in most history books.

The Chinese were hypersensitive to American news reporting. Some dispatches were held up by the censors until Chiang K'ai-shek himself could read them in translation. Any minister of the government mentioned in a dispatch to America was informed by telephone and could hold up the dispatch until he approved it. I lived with the censors in our government dormitory; the two day censors, the one night censor and I were all friends; we ate, drank and partied together. The Deputy Minister of Information also lived in the dormitory in the same squalor we did, and if the night censor could not make up his mind whether a dispatch might clear or not, he would take it to the Deputy Minister. My room in the dormitory was next to the toilet, separated only by a wafer-thin bamboo wall, and sometimes at night I could overhear the inner dialogue of censorship. The sad Deputy Minister was chronically constipated, and would wait until late at night to move his bowels; it took him an hour of pain to perform this function, and he was decent enough not to hold up the rest of the staff

by day for his personal needs. He would grunt, groan, sometimes almost sob, as he submitted to nature in the cubicle behind my thin wall. But there were those nights when the night censor would come trudging upstairs with a dispatch to America, position himself outside the door, and read the dispatch in English as Hsü-pei groaned over his seat. They would then discuss the dispatch in shouting Chinese, only a few words of which I could understand. The poor Deputy Minister would consider with the night censor the effect of such a dispatch on American thinking; and jointly the two would decide whether they had the authority to permit such-or-so a phrase to go over the wires, or whether they must tell the important correspondent that that phrase in that dispatch could only be permitted transmission by higher political authority. They were not attempting to deceive America; they were serving their country. In many instances they were themselves deceived and would question not the correspondent's friendship to China but his accuracy. "Do you think it's true, what he says?" one would ask the other through the partition, wondering about their own war. They did not know what was happening in China; no one did. They and I and all of us served the command post of what we thought was the resistance; but we were all, equally, ignorant.

The next step in learning was a violent one.

Chungking was bombed on May 3 and again on May 4 of 1939. Those bombings are now forgotten milestones in the history of aerial terror, but at the time they marked the largest mass slaughter of defenseless human beings from the air in the rising history of violence. And the Japanese began it.

The Japanese hit once, in early afternoon of May 3, but our office dugout was far from the trail of their bombs. They came again the next evening; they outwitted the Chinese air defenses by circling the city for almost an hour until the Chinese pursuit planes had run out of gas and landed for refueling. Then they came, and performed massacre.

I was with my group of information ministry friends that day and we had left our dugout, which had become stuffy with the long wait inside, and descended to the banks of the Chialing River to watch the sunset until the all-clear would sound. Then, droning through the cloudless sky, came a formation of twenty-seven Japanese bombers, a serene and unbroken line of dots in the sky. The Chinese antiaircraft reached up through the gathering dark, and the tracer bullets, like pink and orange puffballs, made fireworks as they pointed to the

Japanese formation. The shells burst in instant flashes—short, however, visibly short, impotently short of the line above. Then we heard the thudding from behind the ridge inside the old city, and the Japanese were gone, untouched.

I made my way back to the office, then began the four-mile walk to the Friends Mission, deep inside the walled city, where I was then lodging. By this time it was full dark, and what I was seeing was the reaction of a medieval city to the first savage touch of the modern world—which was total panic. Behind the slope, as I climbed up, was the red of spreading fire; and from the red bowl beyond the rim, people were fleeing. They were trudging on foot, fleeing in rickshaws, riding on sedan chairs, pushing wheelbarrows; and as they streamed out, an occasional limousine or army truck would honk or blast its way through the procession, which would part, then close, then continue its flight to the countryside. They carried mattresses, bedrolls, pots and pans, food, bits of furniture. They carried babies in their arms; grandmothers rode piggyback on men's shoulders; but they did not talk: in the silence one could even hear the padding shuffle of their feet.

At the crest, where one began the descent into the old city, I could get a larger view. The electric power lines had been bombed out; so, too, had the trunk of Chungking's water system, which ran down the main street. There was no light but that of the fires, no water to fight the fires, and the fires were spreading up and down the alleys of old Chungking. One could hear the bamboo joints popping as the fire ate the bamboo timbers; now there was noise, women keened, men yelled, babies cried. Some sat rocking back and forth on the ground, chanting. I could hear screaming in the back alleys; several times I saw people dart out of the slope alleyways into the main street, their clothes on fire, then roll over and over again to put out the fires.

I reached the room I had occupied in the Friends Mission those first few weeks, and knew at once I could stay there no longer. The mission had been shattered by a close hit, and in my room I saw a dead body. It had been thrown in by a bomb blast, and concussion had blasted off its face, crushed its rib cage; I could tell the body was a woman's only by the skin-stripped flesh of her breasts. I would not sleep there that night, or ever again, and continued walking, and finding by some chance the companionship of Martin of the UP, went on walking until four in the morning.

There was all through that night, as I walked with Martin, the bewildering contrast of the old and the new. Along the main street,

with which I thought I had become familiar in a few weeks, the slopes had until now been hidden by bamboo-and-mud buildings. As I came to a blazing slope where all the buildings had already been burned off, I saw a Buddha. It was cut into the side of a cliff wall, and its temple had burned away so that the huge bronze cross-legged figure glowed with the reflection of the flames; and I could see its benign countenance softly smiling on a city that wept and wailed.

Chungking had reacted after the first day's bombing with what must have been the old community's normal response to danger. That first night between the two bombings, the town crier, clanging his bell, had paced the streets, warning all who could hear his chant not to pick up cigarettes. The Japanese bombers, he called out, had dropped poisoned cigarettes over the city and to smoke them was to die. That same first night had been the night of an eclipse of the moon, and while the smoke was still rising from the afternoon's bombing, the priests had been exorcising the eclipse. Chinese folklore held that when the moon is eclipsed it is because the Dog of Heaven is trying to swallow it. That first night, the priests had beaten their bronze gongs, as was their duty, and sung the incantations to frighten off the Dog of Heaven. But now, the second night, after the terror bombing, there were no priests about, and nothing to defend the people of the old city from the killings of the new age.

Statistics often mislead. This time they did not. The official figures reported that between three and four thousand people were burned to death that night by Japanese incendiary bombs; how many more or less may have been killed is almost irrelevant in retrospect. More people were killed that night than ever before by bombardiers. But what was important about the killings was their purpose of terror. Nanking and Shanghai had already been bombed; those, however, were military bombings. There was no military target within the old walls of Chungking. Yet the Japanese had chosen, deliberately, to burn it to the ground, and all the people within it, to break some spirit they could not understand, to break the resistance of the government that had taken refuge somewhere in Chungking's suburbs. I never thereafter felt any guilt when we came to bomb the Japanese; when we bombed, we bombed purposefully, to erase Japan's industry and war-making power; no American planes swooped low to machine-gun people in the streets, as had the Japanese.

I had not yet learned, as I was to learn later in Vietnam, that senseless terror is worse than useless; senseless terror denies even the craven, the submissive, the potentially cooperative, the incentive or

compulsion to yield. The senseless terror bombings of Chungking had a result that was immediate and primordial in my thinking on politics.

What I learned was that people accept government only if the government accepts its first duty—which is to protect them. This is an iron rule, running from bombed-out Chungking to the feudal communities of the Middle Ages to the dark streets of New York or Rome where the helpless are so often prey. Whether in a feudal, modern, imperial or municipal society, people choose government over nongovernment chiefly to protect themselves from dangers they cannot cope with as individuals or families.

Thus, then, within days of the bombings of May, with no political protest from anyone, the "guest" government, the "national" government, abolished the old municipal government and proclaimed Chungking a "Special" municipality, a ward of the central government. They chose as the appointed mayor one of the Americanists—K. C. Wu, a one-time Princetonian, an aspiring novelist and short-story writer (in English). K. C. Wu did not depend on votes, as do mayors of American cities, so he performed arbitrarily and superbly. He cleared fire lanes, organized fire-fighting systems, repaired the water mains, and did all those things Americans do most efficiently. He was the very model of a modern American mayor, but he could not speak the dialect of old Chungking.

For the next two years, his town echoed to the muffled booming of excavations, as old-fashioned Chinese black powder was used to hollow dugouts. The government, which had brought the new world to Chungking and tempted the Japanese to pursue it by bombing, was responsible for protection. So, slowly, the people of Chungking and their government grew together, and the two years thereafter, as I observed both groups, were among the happiest of my life. There were no more panics; people old and new learned to live together.

I did not, however, serve this national government for long. The bombings were too exciting to write of as a propagandist; the tug of journalism, of writing my observations for myself, the ache for a by-line in print, were too strong. An opportunity to change my life was ushered in by happy accident.

The accident, as so often happens, was the random ricochet of a distant decision, and came about as follows: War was coming in 1939. In New York, Henry R. Luce was making ready his three magazines, *Time, Life* and *Fortune,* to cover that war. Luce was a China-born

American; so, too, was his then favorite young man, John Hersey, fresh out of Yale and Cambridge, unknown to fame. And in the spring of 1939, Luce had sent young Hersey to the Orient to scout for "stringers" who might feed copy from Asia to his magazines.

John Hersey was only twenty-five when he arrived in Chungking at the end of May, and I had just passed my twenty-fourth birthday that month. Hersey stayed in Chungking for little more than a week on his visit, inquiring what loose newsman might be available to "string" for *Time*. Blithe, handsome, tall, a Yale varsity football player, Hersey had every quality I then admired most in any contemporary, as well as self-possession and beauty. He was, at that age, an outgoing man. His singing, when he drank, was as rich in tone as my grandfather's; he could match any of us in any athletic feat, and once when Martin, a 180-pounder, got very drunk, Hersey carried him bodily all the way down a cliffside set of stairs, lest Martin fall. Hersey spoke easily and gently in those days, and wrote, as I and the world were later to learn, even better. Above all, he loved China, where he had been born, as much as I did or Luce did; and his fascination lay not so much with daily journalism as with history itself. This last quality was, of course, to make him one of the true progenitors of a new school of journalism when war came to America two years later.

Before the week was out, Hersey offered me the "stringer" job, which, as he explained it, was quite easy. Cable tolls from Chungking to New York were fifty cents a word. Expensive. Thus I should write backgrounders and "mailers." The magazines were not interested in overnight news, spot news from China; anything I wrote would have to be useful for a six-week or two-month span. In short, I should write the kind of copy I was sending the Boston *Globe* and other free-lance outlets, but not worry about the length; the New York office would edit what it found useful. I should try to tell not what had *happened*, but what was *happening*. This is the essence of the difference between daily and magazine journalism. For this I would be guaranteed a fifty-dollar monthly retainer, plus an extra fee for whatever was used.

I began immediately to churn out mailers for *Time* magazine and by the end of July there arrived in one of Chungking's sporadic mail deliveries a full harvest of checks. A seven-dollar check from the Boston *Globe*, and the same article I had sent to the *Globe* had been bought by the *Manchester Guardian* for four guineas! I had recycled the material for the Australian Broadcasting Commission and they had paid me five Australian pounds! On top of that came notice of a first check for fifty dollars from *Time*, and a supplementary fee of $125 for

the first outgush of material I had sent them in June. All in all, more than I could earn in three months at the Ministry of Information. I could begin to think of myself as a journalist.

Poised thus, about to take off, yet still cautious, I needed only one more breakthrough to quit the Ministry of Information and secure my journalistic base. I needed a major story—a narrative, a scoop, not a feature—that would cement *Time* to me. The commerce of journalism and my education in history ran, fortunately, together; since all other newsmen in Chungking were bound by their jobs to the cablehead and daily deadlines, they could not take weeks to visit the war fronts, reachable only by long foot marches. But with a leave of absence from the Ministry of Information I could do so. Thus, in September of 1939, as the war in Europe broke out, I set off for the Yellow River in the north, and the province of Shansi, where a battle was going on. If I could catch up with actual combat, I could write of it for *Time* as something more vivid than the bombings of the capital, which had now become routine.

The Ministry of Information was happy to give me leave. I think my prying had begun to annoy them. They issued me a low-grade military pass to visit the war areas and arranged an airplane ticket to take me to Sian, whence I would be on my own to make my way to the war front two hundred and fifty miles beyond. I was lucky the pass was of such low quality. Had I been granted the VIP pass usually given to famous correspondents and important dignitaries, I would have been escorted to the war front and back in style and seen nothing—as happened to me in the Vietnam War, thirty years later, after I had become known and had to be cocooned from reality. My credentials recommended me to no one; they attested simply that I was authentic and not a Japanese spy—and let me move at worm's level through China at war.

The journey to China's north country was, on a larger scale, like the descent from Chungking's main road to its alleys—a backward progress through time, a journey down to the peasant culture of old China and thence back up again to the ferocity of the twentieth-century war which was burning away that old culture forever. I was seeing, from underneath, a civilization that had lasted for two thousand years just as it began to crumble, and on whose ruins, years later, the young Communists I met in the spreading chaos would build another civilization.

I was in Sian by plane within two hours. Then it was five days

more to make the one-hundred-seventy-mile journey to the Yellow River crossing to the North China war front; another seven days by foot and horse to the front, eighty miles away; several weeks at the front; then an aimless roving through the rear areas as far as Lanchow, on the edge of the northern deserts.

I fell almost immediately into a mood I can only recall as part sightseer's, part anthropologist's. I could observe the people in their villages, but they were too strange to understand. No one spoke English; I had no interpreter; and my Harvard-taught Chinese was little more useful than classical Latin would have been in a Sicilian village. By the time I returned, two months later, I would be able to make my own way in rough street Chinese almost anywhere in China—but by then I had learned more than how to speak poor Chinese.

I learned first about villages. China was then and remains still, even under Communism, a nation of villages; and since one sees things for the first time only once, I shall stretch my notes of these villages over what I was to see again and again in the next six years, when all villages had become the same to my eyes, all of them too familiar.

The first village I saw was a nameless one. I had gone no more than twenty miles on the railway out of Sian when we came to a bomb-out. I flashed my pass at the local military headquarters; an officer grunted, and sent a soldier to take me to a hut a mile or two away. I slept there that night with the family—on a door spread flat, a mat underneath me, a cow next to me, the family sleeping on floor mats also, the chickens gurgling. I rose the next morning and saw the wife mill wheat: an ox tethered to a pole and turning it, pulling the upper grindstone over the lower one, the grain trickling out of the groove, the chickens pecking at it, the wife chasing them away. There was a pit outside the hut where we all defecated, teetering over two footstones to keep balance, using leaves for wiping.

If Chungking was noisy, as all Chinese towns were noisy, the village, as most villages, was silent—the somber, brooding silence of countryside which I later came to recognize as the sound of emotionless vacuum. Nothing happened in villages; people grew up, lived and died in their villages, lashed to the seasons, to the fields, to the crops, their lives empty of any information but gossip, any excitement except fear. A wall ran around this village, as about most villages in China, and inside the wall were five or six little lanes, enclosed by inner walls, within which were the huts. In a small village like this the lanes were beaten earth; in a larger village they were roughly cobbled. Sometimes

there were trees on such lanes; more often not; the lanes were corrugated with ruts; cow droppings lathered them in spots; flies buzzed everywhere; the children wore rough cotton shirts with no bottoms and dumped where they chose; lean dogs slept in the sun. Electricity, newspapers, automobiles—these were faraway things, of no reality.

The villages I passed through for the next two months and for the next six years were all embroideries on the same stark pattern. The peasant and his family took from the soil, lived by the soil, returned their refuse to the soil, finally returned themselves to the soil. In the south, peasants lived by rice; in the north, they lived on wheat buns, millet and noodles; vegetables came as the main course; on feast days, chicken. Only the rich ate meat.

As I wandered the war area a week later, I learned how self-sufficient the villages were. They could live this way forever, as they had always lived, except for the intrusion of violence. One would come down by horseback from a hill to a village pocket which had not been scourged by the Japanese or by modern roads. The young women were healthy, their fine black hair glistening; some mountain pockets were so backward that parents still bound the feet of their young women although that had been outlawed, along with the pigtail, when the Manchu dynasty was overthrown thirty years earlier. In such villages, little children seemed happy; they played with inflated pig bladders, bouncing them like balloons. Once, I had a moment of sheer delight in recognition of kinship when my horse stopped in the middle of a village street and created a huge puddle of piss. Immediately, the little children began playing "jump the pool," hurdling over the puddle again and again, falling in, until an old lady came up and began to shriek at them, scolding at the top of her lungs as my own grandmother used to do in Erie Street.

But as one traveled, over the next ridge one found the unhappy villages—where the war had come and passed, or the war had come and stayed. From one ridge to the village in the hollow over the next ridge, the cycle of life had been disrupted. Children with bloated bellies of hunger, with scabs on their little shaven skulls, sulked in the shadows of the stricken villages; in one village I saw an entire community smitten by trachoma, men, women and children alike with red crusted eyelids, some squeezing the pus from their eyelids so they could open them and see. Then again, in most villages, anyone over forty, man or woman, displayed rotting yellow teeth pitted with black decay, the breath foul.

The villages lived by folklore, by word of mouth, in the world of the past; all news was gossip, and the gossip was inflammation of fear, hope, legend and fact. I learned that villages literally kept no time. In any village, I could ask the hour to check my watch, and if there were two or three people with watches, all had different times. Each village had its own time set by the county magistrate—the *hsien chang*. It might be noon by the *hsien chang*'s time in one village; but twenty miles away on either side, the time might be eleven-thirty or twelve-thirty, or even an hour ahead or behind. No time was official, all times were inaccurate; all recent dates were reckoned by the moon festival or the fall festival, and more important dates by the warlord who had commanded in such-and-such a year, or by whether someone was born before the revolution (1911) or after. There was only one operational time measure in a village—that of sunrise and sunset. At sunrise, men went to work in the field. They knew when it was time to come back by the way the sun slanted; the wife cooked the meal; and then, perhaps, an oil lamp flickered for a few minutes in the dark. One could watch the wisps of smoke, each one a tiny gray plume in the darkening sky as the evening meal was prepared or finished and then, quickly, it was dark, and the oil lamps went out, and all over China, except in the cities, it was night. No other marking of time had any reality to it, except the seasons which framed the days.

Through and about some of these villages ran the new roads. We take roads for granted. Chinese peasants did not, because roads were fresh. They knew the dates (by famine, warlord or season) when the roads had been put through and the roads had connected them to big outside government. The roads were useful: peddlers came off them to sell wares to village markets. But roads were also dangerous. It slowly came to me what the phrase "king's highway" must have meant in Europe years and years ago—how much opportunity the king's highway must have promised, yet how perilous it was. I can do no better in describing the perils of a road for peasants than in transferring to this page some jottings I made on that trip of 1939.

I had been hitchhiking my way on army trucks or "yellow fish" buses shortly after I left the front, and the following occurred, according to my notes that evening.

On the way, our truck overtook a donkey loaded with lumber. The donkey swerved and broke the headlight with the projecting log on its back. Then out hopped the driver, the mechanic and several soldiers, and they seized the peasant and began to beat him. They beat him mercilessly and he cried horribly, he fell on the ground, twirled into a ball, and began to kowtow

with a wailing servility that was disgusting. Every time he brought his head up from the ground as he pleaded for mercy, the mechanic kicked him in the face. The little boy who was with him began to cry and plead; the soldiers seized him bodily and flung him up to the top of the baggage. They kept on pounding and beating the peasant until the *t'ui chang* [lieutenant] came up, and the *t'ui chang* made them let the peasant go. The peasant got up, staggered away, his face a puffy mass of welts and wounds, and thanked the *t'ui chang*. The *t'ui chang* told the soldiers, "*Pu-yao ta t'a, mei yu yung*" ["Don't hit him, it's no use"]. Then the *t'ui chang* explained to me that the bus driver and mechanic were angry because they would have to pay the twenty dollars the headlight cost.

Modernizing China required roads, roads meant training drivers and mechanics not to steal auto parts or gasoline—and punishing them for mistakes or damage, whether their fault or not. So the drivers and mechanics saw the peasants who used their roads as, at best, an inconvenience and, at worst, a threat to their jobs. I, as a Westerner with an official pass, was safest on the king's highway; but a peasant was at his most vulnerable.

Dangerous as this new world of his own government was to the village peasant, the Japanese who now followed such roads introduced him to an even more dangerous world.

I had not come to write a study of village sociology. I had come to cover the war, and I had chosen Shansi because it was the only active front in China. Had the Japanese broken all the way through in the summer and fall of 1939, they would have held the dominant heights of the Yellow River, could have closed easily on Sian and, quite possibly, have cut China in two, cutting Nationalists from Communists for good. The Japanese victory would have been styled an epic one and achieved a grandeur in the retelling. The fact that the Chinese held, however, wiped out the narrative value of the Southeast Shansi campaign for any history of war. Tens of thousands of men died to hold the lines exactly where they had been before the summer of 1939 and where they would remain until 1944. In the eyes of history they died uselessly, unworthy of record. For myself, it was the first real battlefront I had seen, and a giant step in education.

The scene of action was the Chungtiao mountain range of Southeast Shansi province, the province that snuggles into the elbow of the Yellow River. In the summer the Japanese Army had mounted a three-divisional offensive to clear the mountain range and reach, then cross, the river. But the fall rains had come early, mired their trucks and artillery, and given the Chinese foot soldiers time to gather and to

cut off the Japanese in garrison pockets. Isolated thus in villages and towns, trying to extricate themselves, the Japanese went absolutely berserk before they were driven out.

The action I saw in the fall of 1939 was in the Ch'in River valley, where imperial road markers dating back to the Manchu dynasty still flagged the stone-paved carters' trace. I was following the Chinese soldiers forward, and they moved on foot, fifteen to twenty miles a day, crawling up and over and through mountain gaps, their officers ahead on horseback. Whatever they needed they carried—each soldier toting his bedding, his sausage roll of rice, his ammunition and grenades, some doubling up to carry telephone wire, machine gun parts, cartridge boxes, medical supplies. Mules brayed under dismantled pieces of artillery. Sick soldiers straggled back from the front, hobbling with staves, on the five- or ten-day hike to the nearest aid station; beggars clustered pleading as the columns trudged through villages; sometimes one could see peasants impressed to carry those too sick or wounded to walk; flies buzzed over the stretchers where men in coma, or groaning, were carried on with undressed wounds. And then I caught up with the path of Japanese retreat through the villages they had savaged. I have since so often exaggerated in retelling what the Japanese did that perhaps it is best to restrain memory to the text of my original dispatch.

. . . village after village completely destroyed. Houses shattered and burned, walls fouled, bridges torn up. Houses were burned by the [Japanese] soldiery both out of boredom and deviltry and because they were cold and needed fire and warmth.

The Japanese looted indiscriminately and efficiently. Everything of value was stripped and taken away. Telephones, wires, clocks, soap, bedding, collected for transfer to their own supply department. On their own, the soldiers went in for simpler forms of looting. Clothes and food were what they wanted, and they were not very discriminate in their tastes; women's silk garments, peasant cotton trousers, shoes, underwear, were all stripped off the backs of their possessors whenever Chinese were unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of Japanese detachments.

The Japanese soldiers were caked in mud, chest high; their beards were bristling with two weeks' growth; and they were ravenously hungry. The peasants, in fleeing before the approach of the Japanese, had taken their pigs, cows, grain and other food with them into the hills where the Japanese could not follow. All through the valley, tiny Japanese garrisons were mired in mud, unable to communicate with one another and slowly starving. . . . The names of the villages (Liushe, Wangchiachuang, etc.) are meaningless 100 miles away, but in some, every single woman without exception was raped by the

soldiers in occupation. In villages whose occupants had not fled quickly enough, the first action of the Japanese was to rout out the women and have at them: women who fled to grain fields for hiding were forced out by cavalry who rode their horses through the fields to trample them and frighten them into appearance.

Male villagers were stripped naked, lashed to carts and driven forward by the Imperial Army as beasts of burden. Japanese horses and mules were beaten to death in the mud; and on any road and all the hills of the valley, one can see the carcasses of their animals rotting and the bones of their horses whitening in the sun. The Chinese peasants who were impressed to take their places were driven forward with the same pitiless fury until they collapsed, died, or were driven mad.

The action I saw in the Ch'in valley was all I expected, and made a fine story for a fledgling combat reporter.

But what I left completely out of my reporting and what I find buried now in my notes was far more important—the story of how revolutions begin.

I wish I could describe better what was spread before me in that combat area; in particular what I saw in one five-day period, which was to change all my understanding of politics.

In those five days, I was being passed from unit to unit, over and behind Japanese lines, into guerrilla areas and penetrated areas—but I was with Chinese officers, recent college students of my own age, men who were leading guerrilla bands, and I could not accurately tell a Communist unit from a popular-front unit from a Nationalist unit, in the spectrum of their loyalties, alliances and suspicions.

The only metaphor that occurs to me is from local folklore. Those valleys in the Chungtiao Mountains, through which I rode, are noted for their local fogs and mists, exactly the kind of "fogs in mountain" one sees in great Chinese paintings. Chinese travel writers would remark, as a curiosity of these mountains, how one could look across a bed of low-lying fog in the valley and see on the next ridge horsemen riding a trail as if floating in the distance. I was now seeing this myself. All the way across the valley, on a far ridge, were distant horsemen climbing over a pass slit in the crest, as if rising from a bowl of mist—horsemen in the sky. Now and again the far horsemen would disappear in the clouds as they descended, then rise again above the clouds as they followed the trail, and turn around a bend, and disappear.

I could see carts, or files of soldiers, appearing and disappearing in such mists beyond, and their officers on horseback at the head of the column. But in those five days I did not know who was who on the

far ridges, so I cannot put this story together correctly, for I was lost in mist myself—political, linguistic, fear-ridden mist.* Yet the episode of those five days was important.

The politics that moved this local theater of revolution rise now in memory from a preposterously small stage; but the politics were far more important than the fighting. The stage was the Ch'in River valley, no larger than thirty by seventy miles. If gridded with a modern American highway, it could have been traversed in half an hour one way, an hour the other way. But it then had neither a working highway, nor radio, nor communications; only people held in villages which had not changed for centuries, yet which now *had* to change. It took days of walking and horseback riding to get through the valley. And in that valley the most efficient people, the most indomitable defenders of the helpless, the best killers, the most persuasive couriers of the ideas that move people into politics, were young Communists of my own age.

Three counties, of about 200,000 to 300,000 peasants each, spread over the valley, each county with its walled-about, crenelated county seat—Yangcheng, Chincheng, Kaoping. In two of these, Yangcheng and Chincheng, the new magistrates were twenty-six years old, and in one county, Kaoping, the magistrate was only twenty-four years old! Two had graduated the National University in Peking, China's Harvard. And these two had majored in ancient Chinese history! The other was a graduate of the Shansi Provincial University, and he had majored in government. When the Japanese war had broken out, two years earlier, these students had fled from the occupied towns to the hills and the resistance rather than stay under the Japanese. They knew history; they were young, with the energy and muscles of young men—and so they were useful. Whereas, as both provincial and national governments had so quickly discovered, the traditional appointed county magistrates of Southeast Shansi were totally useless in war.

*The serious reader must regard this adventure in and behind the Japanese lines, as related by me now, with extreme caution. I had just been dismissed from the large politics of Chungking and went to North China with a smattering of Boston-taught Chinese language. It had taken me weeks to adjust my classical Chinese to spoken Chinese: when I set out I did not know, with all my education, how to ask to go to a toilet, until I was caught in a Chinese troop train, in distress, and was taught by common soldiers the proper word. My Chinese improved quickly and I soon learned the words for guns, rifles, machine guns, companies, regiments, bombs, shells, division headquarters, airplanes, distances, etc. Military dialogue is the simplest interchange in any language. But I never did learn, even after six years in China, the vocabulary of motivation, personal history, political purpose, or how and why things come to be. My blurred memory of the politics of the combat in Southeast Shansi is highly defective. But my notes, on which I base these recollections, are real—usually written by candlelight at night, as I tried to puzzle meaning out of conversations and stories I only half understood.

For example: in the county seat of Yangcheng, when the Japanese had first come raiding a year earlier, in the summer of 1938, the old magistrate and the elders had walked down the road in their long black silk gowns to greet the marauders, and offer them obeisance, civility and local bearers. This they did for all banditti and warlords. The Japanese column had passed through; and then the Japanese planes had followed, swooped and machine-gunned the peasants who stood in Yangcheng's streets; the peasants had never seen planes before, so they stood in the streets to look, and they were murdered. Then, returning, the Japanese raiders massacred all the peasants who had not already fled. The Japanese had raided like this again in the fall of 1938, and by then, whatever the motley commands of the Chinese armies were, their commanders were calling for more effective local civilian support. Thus, by the time I got there in the fall of 1939, with the war entering its third year, the old long-gowned, black-silk elders had been replaced by new young men in all thirty counties of bloody Southeast Shansi. And although all these new men may not have been as effective, or of the same background, as the three young men I met, they were the nerve controls, the leadership elements of local resistance. The army needed them for support, for contact with the peasants; and the peasants, sickened and terrified by Japanese butchery, were willing to turn anywhere for guidance to survival.

The Yangcheng county magistrate, twenty-six years old, was the one who had majored in government at Shansi Provincial University. The night I slept in his courtyard, I woke the next morning to find him lecturing village elders on what "government" is. They must not beat peasants, and they must not collect the taxes themselves; the grain taxes were to go to his deputy magistrates directly, so that the food could be given to the army.

The Chincheng county magistrate, also twenty-six years old, was from Peking University; he was an attractive poseur, and dangled a cigarette in a holder from his lips. Since there was much coal and iron about Chincheng, he was organizing little forges in the hills which could make grenades, to be filled with black powder and used against the Japanese vehicles; one workshop was making pistols for soldiers and officers of scrap steel from abandoned Japanese equipment.

The Kaoping magistrate was exactly my own age, twenty-four. He wore a captured Japanese overcoat that hung loosely over his plump frame down to his ankles, and his conversation, as well as his round face with its wire-rimmed spectacles, made him resemble a graduate student back home. We talked about history over the barrier of my halting Chinese, and he would shift from history to the problem

of organizing village self-defense corps. The county of the Kaoping magistrate, Ts'ao, marked the hazy junction where Japanese occupation troops, Communist guerrillas, government troops and Nationalist guerrillas all intersected. Ts'ao was loyal to Chiang K'ai-shek; but he was also very friendly with the Communist guerrillas. He was also loyal to Yen Hsi-shan, the warlord provincial governor; to the Nationalist units when they marched through; and to anyone else fighting Japanese. Since he was a student of Chinese history and hated only Japanese, his only purpose was to organize resistance.

All three young men had, by the time of my arrival, thoroughly learned the business of war. The enemy must get no cooperation in their areas as they had from Chinese elsewhere. Anywhere from a third to half of the Japanese forces that occupied the province of Shansi were "puppet troops"—Chinese turncoats, Manchurian Chinese, Formosan Chinese, North China peasants with no sense of nationhood, who served the enemy for warmth, for pay, for food, or out of fear of reprisal against their families. My trio of student officials in Shansi was reinstalling a sense of nationality.

Everyone must fight, was their message. Women must fight against the Japanese—thus a Women's National Salvation Movement, which spun, made blankets for the troops, wove sandals. Students must fight—thus a Students' National Salvation Movement. Every village must have a self-defense corps—thirty men for each large village, five grenades to a man, two guns or more to a unit. Children must be scouts. Old people who could not flee must become spies as Japanese passed through. It was better to waste the countryside, burn their own homes, desolate the land, than to serve the Japanese. Every village had signs painted on the walls, instructing: "Burn the Crops, Empty the Rooms, and Flee."

The three young men knew they were consciously modeling their efforts on what they had learned from Communist organizing efforts; they were making the countryside an environment of hate for all invaders; they were writing on blank minds, teaching people how to defend themselves and kill. They, themselves, all three, were simple Nationalists, but they were in no way hostile to the Communists, who were their allies; and the closer I got to the front, the warmer became the relationship.

The enthusiastic Kaoping magistrate was the most friendly to the Communists. His county was occupied, incomprehensibly but clearly, in three halves, or overlapping layers—one half by the Japanese, one half by Nationalist armies, one half by Communists. The three layers

overlapped three-dimensionally, permitting the three halves. Since I wanted to see Communists, and he dealt with them every day, it was he who passed me on to the Communist guerrillas.

The Communist leader—my notes record his name only as Captain Wu—was older; he must have been all of twenty-eight or twenty-nine, a tall, unsmiling young man who, to my puzzlement, hated the government of Chiang K'ai-shek as much as he hated the Japanese invaders. We talked all through the night at his encampment behind Japanese lines. I knew why he hated the Japanese; they were killers. But he was angry at Chiang K'ai-shek, too, because Chiang was supposed to be a national leader—and Wu's Communist volunteers were paid only one dollar a month (fifteen cents in American money), while the government soldiers were paid eight dollars a month ($1.20 in American money). Government troops had their food sent to them over the passes in sacks, whereas his troops had to get their food by "persuading" the peasants to give it. Government troops had their rifles and ammunition *given* to them, but his soldiers had to capture the rifles and machine guns with which they fought. In this unit there were eight different kinds of guns, and how could you get ammunition to fit eight different kinds of guns?

Captain Wu was a stern, energetic, thoroughly capable young man. But I recall how, with a sudden shift in mood, he went off into an inexplicable rage against the *T'ê P'ai*. I finally began to understand from his tirade that the *T'ê P'ai* were the Trotskyites! Here in the hills, the war had nourished his politics with a green and native Communism; he had never met a Trotskyite. But his anger at this invisible faction of Trotskyites was as fierce as his anger against Japan or against Chiang. Trotskyites, he said, were *I-chi-fan* people. Such people, said Captain Wu, opposed everything (*fan* being the Chinese character for opposition). Trotskyites opposed Japanese (*fan Jih*), opposed Chiang K'ai-shek (*fan Kuo*) and opposed Communists (*fan Kung*); thus, opposing everything, they were called *I-chi-fan*. His unit had executed a Trotskyite recently. How did he know the person was a Trotskyite, I asked. Because he was helping the Japanese, replied young Captain Wu in fury. His rage against the Trotsky goblins was as unmistakable as his ability; but as incomprehensible to me as the factional battles over sibylline doctrine under Mao in the name of Communist against Communist thirty years later.

In the morning it was my turn to show anger. I had, by that time, become so exasperated by the different measures of time in these old Chinese villages that I was explosive. I wanted to be up at six, and

astride the horse at seven. Seven came, eight came, nine came, and finally the Communist platoon came to fetch me. So, I thought, the Chinese Communists have no more sense of time or timing than Nationalists or warlords—they simply do not understand time. But when I rode out of Captain Wu's village I could see why he had detained me. The children were lined up in the street, waving banners. The banners said in Chinese that America and China were friends. America and China would fight to the end against the Japanese bandits and imperialism. And one magnificent sign said in English: "Welcome Theodore H. White, Famous American Journalist, Friend of the Resistance." I could not be angry. The children sang songs and I was escorted out of town as a hero. Captain Wu gave me a captured Japanese overcoat and hat, and we went on.

Captain Wu explained Communist tactics to me. They were textbook simple. Guerrillas never attacked in late fall or winter, because there was no cover after the fields were harvested; summer and early fall, when the grain was high enough to hide them, was their time for assault. And always when they had superiority in number. They never, never offered positional resistance to a Japanese foray; they ran to the hills, to the villages, and disappeared, or dissolved, to regather at another point later. To have the peasants with them was essential—for intelligence, for shelter, for food, for care of wounded. Mao's phrase "The people are the sea, we are the fish in it" was supreme doctrine.

Mao's sea seemed, however, more like a moving stream as we rode along. As we rode, or paused, or forded a river, I slowly became aware of the clutter of little boys who trooped or clustered where we stopped; they had been sucked into the stream by the romance of guerrilla life and had become part of it. Called *hsiao kuei* ("little devils"), they were anywhere from ten to fifteen years old and had left home as the war dissolved the countryside. They trotted after their older brothers, helping in any way they could. They sat in camp at night and listened to the older soldiers tell stories; they must have grown up on hand-me-down, word-of-mouth legends of the Long March of 1934-1935. They cooked, fetched, carried; the army was their home. When their unit came to a stream too deep for them to ford, the older soldiers carried the little ones across on their shoulders. Such little boys, if they survived, probably now command the Chinese Red Army. The world they came from is obliterated; the army became their parent, shelter and home.

The panorama of the old world that was being wiped out was

made quite clear to me when Captain Wu took me to a ridge overlooking a Japanese outpost in a large walled town in the valley below. We could see scores of lesser villages dotted in the valley, and as we lay peering, Wu identified which ones were "ours" (meaning Communist), which were "friendly" (meaning Nationalist in loyalty), which villages were held by Japanese.

It was like seeing a huge photographic enlargement of a microcellular structure. China was then a nation of five hundred million people, and there were, perhaps, three million such little villages, each one a single cell, in a society hitherto the most changeless in the world. Somehow, in China's time-frozen history, these cells had coagulated under the glistening patina of successive imperial governments in a culture of breathtaking beauties and cruelties. Underneath the patina, however, a deliquescence had set in, a melting away of the jellies of life. The forms remained but the forms were brittle—brittle to the touch of Western commerce, to the touch of warlords; now, finally, brittle and incapable of survival as the Japanese carried war across the country into villages. In each village, leadership had to change, new ideas creeping in with the need of survival, with the need that government must offer protection. From the ridge where I lay watching with Captain Wu, the pragmatic young guerrilla leader could point out villages which I can now, symbolically, translate into the political deliquescence of my imagination. Those villages below that were Communist-dominated could be identified by the fact that their walls had been torn down! Guerrillas, said Wu, could flee or enter such villages before or after Japanese thrusts without fear of being trapped by the walls.

This Chinese Communist hatred of walls, this hunter-hunted reflex, was later, in victory, translated, alas, to the destruction of the most beautiful of all city walls in the world, the magnificent ramparts of old Peking. But then, as the Communists fought the Japanese, and knew the world required changing, the tearing down of the walls was the visible signature of their presence—and the deliquescence of old China.

About me, in the five days of hard riding at the front, I saw all this but could not fit it into any pattern of reporting that would make a good story. As the old system melted or crumbled under the Japanese penetration, the Communists melted themselves into what was left. The Japanese shattered structure after structure in their offensives, raids, forays, bombings of China. What was left was not a society, but a spongelike mass, a honeycomb of mashed cells in most of which

some sting was left. Some villages supported the Nationalists, others the provincial government, and yet others supported the Communists—but they supported whoever could serve their need of protection best, who could save their women from rape by the Japanese, their men from impressment as coolies. The Japanese had come to kill; the Communists were the most efficient counterkillers.

A single episode will give the flavor of this honeycomb of resistance. On one particular evening, I was riding with a lieutenant, a Nationalist guerrilla leader, and his horsemen. The Japanese flushed us and we rode hard to get away, and came to a village on a hill as the sun was falling. I was riding, as I recall, a white horse with wooden saddle frame, and I was horrified to discover during the chase that between the saddle frame and the horse's back there was only one thin woolen blanket. The blanket had been worn thin and the horse's skin rubbed raw; its back was bleeding, as we jounced over brooks and I flogged him to keep up with the others. We had to get water and food for the horses, and I wanted padding for my bleeding horse. The lieutenant stopped our little group in a village and asked the few peasants there for food and water for the horses. Then he said (and I could understand that much colloquial Chinese by then), "*Wo-men shih pa-lu-chun*" ("We are of the Eighth Route Army"), which meant that we were Communist guerrillas. I asked him why he said that; we were a Nationalist group. And he snapped at me, "Shut up! If we tell them we're Nationalist guerrillas, they won't feed our horses or water them."

The episode, which I thought then to be unimportant, keeps coming back to haunt me. The message that the Communists bore, true or false, had penetrated into the hills; they held the "hearts and minds" of these people who could neither read nor write. The people were certainly not unfriendly to Nationalist troops, who, like them, hated Japanese; but their political leadership, in the most primitive way, had been won over to the Communists, who were beginning to introduce ideas.

But the crazy patchwork of interlocked or conflicting loyalties was not limited to the valley Captain Wu had shown to me from his hill. It was larger. I had, for example, been passed up the way to the active Kaoping front by the 40th Army. Inquiring as I did about the 40th Army, I learned that its soldiers were Manchurian Chinese, who had been driven out of their homeland in 1931 by the Japanese seizure of Manchuria. Yet they still fought. They had been part of the group of divisions that had encircled, then kidnapped, Chiang K'ai-shek in

Sian in 1936. They were now a dwindling band of men who had been fighting for ten years and wanted to go home. The 40th Army was very friendly with the Communists, although it stood officially on the muster as a Nationalist Chiang K'ai-shek army. From the Kaoping sector of the 40th Army command, I had been passed to the Communist units, then passed from them on the way back with some stiffness to the 27th Army. The 27th Army was commanded, absolutely, by Nationalist central government officers, and I was received there, after coming from a guerrilla area, with intense suspicion. The 27th Army was the only army I saw on that front which had telephone communications with the rear. Being suspicious of me, its forward regimental commander let me linger, hungry and tired, in his anteroom as he telephoned back up the chain of command to find out who this person was—a Japanese spy, a Communist spy, a wanderer, or whatever. Someone on the line must have had the number of my pass, and when he learned I was truly an American journalist I was well received: my feet were washed in hot water by his soldiers, I was offered hot perfumed towels to bathe my face and fed an extraordinary dinner.

On my way back from the front, I could see things more clearly. The 27th Army, for example, was made up of provincial draftees from Yunnan and Szechwan, far to the south. But they were adequately supplied because all their officers, from captain up, were graduates of Chiang K'ai-shek's military academy. It was different from the 40th Army, which had once been the property of the Manchurian bandit-warlord Chang Tso-lin, then became the property of the "Christian general" Feng Yu-hsiang.* That army in turn was different from the old syphilitic army of Yang Hu-cheng, just south of them. Yang Hu-cheng had been a bandit, pure and simple, and when I left the 27th Army to return, I was given a military escort to protect me not from the enemy but from the bandit soldiers of Yang Hu-cheng, who might be on the loose.

*Feng Yu-hsiang was called the Christian general not only because he baptized his troops en masse with a hose, but because he had a rudimentary social conscience. He forbade rape and punished his troops for rape, for one thing, and occasionally, on inspection days, after checking their rifles, he would order all soldiers to hold out their hands to be examined for clean fingernails. My preoccupation with the warlord era of Chinese life, as an exercise in political anthropology, came to an end shortly after this trip. The warlords were fascinating as individuals, more fascinating yet as an episode of government degenerating to brutality—but they were of the past, not of the present. I was still collecting warlord folklore at this time, but I remember best my last impression of Feng Yu-hsiang after the war in New York, when we exchanged visits. His apartment, on Riverside Drive, had a spectacular view of the Hudson River; but it was barricaded by cases and cartons of groceries, coffee, soup, canned meats. He was prepared to live in New York under siege, with the supplies of his personal staff entirely under his control. He was persuaded to leave America for Russia in 1948. He was probably considered useless to the Russians, for he died in a fire on a steamboat in the Black Sea—burned to death. Other warlords

Of all the memories of my visit to the front—of the villages, the mountains, the killings, the poverty, the hardships—the three young county magistrates I met and liked remain outlined most firmly in my recollection, they and Captain Wu. Old men with ideas stir up young men; but only young men know how to choose other young men. Generally, students are the best vehicles for passing on ideas, for their thoughts are plastic and can be molded, and they can adjust the ideas of the old men to the shape of reality as they find it in villages and hills of China—or in ghettos and suburbs of America.

Old men grow rigid, and keep their shop of ideas at the same storefront; they know what goes wrong when it goes wrong, but are too brittle to know how to fix what goes wrong. Young men grow old, too, and move from passion to politics to power soon enough.

A year after I had left Southeast Shansi, trying to keep track of my friends there, I learned that the young *hsien chang* of Yangcheng, the one who had majored in government, had been purged—but by whom, or which group, or for what cause, I never found out. What happened to all the others is equally unknowable. Young men following a successful cause sometimes succeed with it. The lucky among them harden into bureaucrats and abandon their old companions of the field when another logic, that of government, seizes them. Most die or have their spirit broken on the way to success—and I am sure that is what happened to my young men when the revolution hardened about them years later.

I came back by bus from the war areas, and remember of the long journey south only how wonderful it was to cross the range of the Ch'in-ling Mountains, which separates North China from Szechwan. One crosses through the pass, and in half an hour, one has left behind the eroded hills that face the arid country of the north to find oneself in the warm moist air of Szechwan, where bamboo begins to grow on the south face of the range.

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were equally colorful. Wu P'ei-fu, for example, was not only the warlord of Honan, but a lover of flowers and trees. He had tried to plant his province with many flowering trees, but only succeeded in accomplishing this along the rail lines he controlled. Having had a victorious clash with the warlord of Manchuria, Chang Tso-lin, Wu pursued—and Chang Tso-lin, in retreat, would halt his command train wherever he could find a pause, to send his troops out to chop down the young trees Wu P'ei-fu had planted. The troops who had done this were probably the troops of what I called, on this trip, the 40th Army. There were many other remnant warlord groups involved in the fight against the Japanese; particularly the troops of the province of Shantung, who, ultimately, went over to the Communists. The great warlord of Shantung for a period of ten years in the twenties was Chang Tsung-chang, who was remembered as "Old Eighty-six Dollars." The nickname came from the rumor that Chang Tsung-chang's penis, even in repose, was as long as a stack of eighty-six silver dollars, one coin placed on top of the other—which would make it nine inches long.