

—But She Knew Many

(continued from previous page)

underlying philosophies with one officer before I realised that he was the famous Commander-in-Chief, General Nieh himself, and not a mere secretary."

"Then why did you leave the Communist area? It has been reported that you went to and fro into Japanese-occupied territory."

"Well, some missionaries have done that, because, in a sense, the Chinese need there is greatest. Though strictly speaking, the Japanese have not occupied any areas in China, only penetrated them—taken their main town and railways, that is. On both sides of the line Chinese Government—either Kuo Ming Tang, or Communist, or "Mixed"—still maintains radio communication, at least with Chungking. We frequently slipped across these lines at night between the sentries in the course of our ordinary work. But I presently made up my mind, after many struggles with conscience, to get official Japanese permission to go to Peking. You see, we were getting desperate for medical supplies. Not only were there the ordinary sick, but wounded, cotton-clad guerrillas were constantly being brought in who had lost hands or feet from exposure. (The Japanese soldiers who captured them went protected in New Zealand wool!). The authorities were most polite to neutral missionaries in those days, having quite groundless hopes of winning them to support the New Order, and I got what we wanted. Indeed, I presently had quite an "underground railway" smuggling out medical supplies into the free areas, and gradually found I was turning into a sort of agency for getting hold of personnel, too—medical people, teachers, agricultural experts, engineers. But it was terribly dangerous, since there are spies everywhere, and when one day I had a hint not to return to a certain place, I got the Japanese to give me my passport to Hong Kong before they decided on anything worse."

"And then you came home here?"

"Not yet. In Hong Kong, Madame Sun Yat Sen (the widow of modern China's real founder and eldest of the three Soong sisters, you know), and Bishop Hall, who together were the main forces in the China Defence League, were most interested in my first-hand account of the Communist 'island' in the north, and arranged to send me back through free territory to work under the Chinese Red Cross. Dr. Robert Lim, a Singapore-born Chinese, had been hard at work organising this. There were only about 5,000 doctors fully qualified in our sense in all China, but he had arranged quick courses in surgery and sanitation for old-style herbalists, male nurses, and similar people. British sympathisers had given a small fleet of coal-burning lorries, and we took these up to Chungking through Indo-China. To avoid bombing we could travel some parts of the way only by night. But in two months and a bit we did arrive in what was until recently China's Wild West, but which is now throbbing with the new life that the millions of refugees have brought with them. At Sian I encountered the co-operatives again."

"Are the co-operatives as important as we are told?"

"Much more so. You see, the Japanese do not hope to hold down China militarily. They want to flood it with their goods and currency so that the people become in practice dependent on Japan. When an area has been scorched—and the Japanese armies every harvest move into production basins, reap what crops they can and burn the rest—the poor peasants struggling back have to live somehow. Starting new industries on the spot is the only way to keep them from falling into the Japanese net. And away inland, too, co-operatives make the villages independent and co-operative-minded and less poverty-driven."

"Is a Japanese invasion as bad as we are told it is?"

Arguments v. Bullets

"Quite as bad. But the Japanese soldiers themselves you can soon sort out by their faces. Many of them I have found really humane and much troubled. Chinese that I know have contacted fellow Christians among the invaders. And some Japanese radicals are helping Chinese publicity—village plays and that sort of thing. The Chinese attitude is amazing. Their soldiers are frequently taught a little Japanese in order to argue with the enemy man to man in close fighting, and in most villages you see painted up such slogans as 'Treat Enemy Prisoners Kindly.'"

"That makes it harder to understand why so reasonable a people as the Chinese has not yet settled its Central Government-Communist quarrel."

"Well, it has—partially, at any rate, and *pro tem*. The main issue between the two parties, indeed, seems to be how fast Dr. Sun's Three People's Principles are to be applied. Chiang Kai-Shek is everywhere respected as capable, courageous, and personally sincere. But his party is not prepared to make the drastic changes—particularly in land tenure—that the Communists say are immediately essential."

"What, then, are the present prospects in general?"

"The people in China are very, very weary. Unless we can get them relief soon, they may be too exhausted to play their proper part in making the peace. New Zealand has done a lot for China through Rewi Alley and James Bertram and the scores of missionaries she has sent. But China will need more from us—starting right now with a better informed interest in her problems."

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