

IT was a windy morning in Tokyo. The staff-car swayed across a sagging bridge on to a smelly sandbank, turned left towards a huddle of army huts. A young American artillery lieutenant came whistling out of an office: the reporter from the *Stars and Stripes* did the introductions.

"Very pleased indeed to meet you, Mr. Uh-huh. Can I show you round?"

"Thanks," I said. "But I think I know the way. I used to live here."

The sign above the doorway read: "OMORI PRISON".

"Is that so?" said the young lieutenant with a new interest. "Were you here as a P.O.W.? Well, well, too bad we haven't still got Tojo on show. We had him here with a whole bunch of his pals, but they didn't like it. Said it was too cold. So we shifted them across to Sugamo."

I nodded. I had been to Sugamo, that modern gaol-building that rises white amid the blackened ashes of Tokyo, where some 500 Japanese war criminals were awaiting trial and sentence: and where I had met some old friends. It hadn't been a very pleasant experience for them or for me. I was trying to forget about it.

### Goodbye to Omori

But this was my last visit to Tokyo, this trip to the prison camp where with comrades-in-arms from Hong Kong and the Philippines I had lived and worked for the Nips, and watched Tokyo burn, and seen out the last two years of the Far Eastern war. Here at Omori every window and paling spoke to me of the past. There was not a yard of this infected sand that was not soaked with human tragedy. Suffering, heroism, and endurance; the living drama of men that I had known, within these narrow walls. And now it was a U.S. army billet, and careless G.I.'s strode between wooden huts that for them held no ghosts. . . .

We made the rounds of the camp, and the boys from the *Stars and Stripes* got their pictures. I tried to tell the young American officer how it had felt when we watched a burning B-29 come low above Omori, to plunge magnificently into the shallow bay. And how it felt when the first U.S. carrier-borne planes showed up after the Japanese surrender. I tried, and I gave it up; some things just don't go into words.

"Only one thing, lieutenant," I asked at the finish. "I see you've got Japanese carpenters at work in the old guard-house. Would you mind if I took a couple of panels from the wall, just as a souvenir?"

"Why, surely! Help yourself to the whole darn camp."

The Nips had knocked out two walls of my old cell; but the inner walls remained. "See those panels? I can tell you just what's behind each one of them. Cardboard cartons there, empty Spam tins there, Sun Maid raisin wrappers!" The lieutenant's eyes popped as I ripped off the light pinewood with a crowbar, to expose the evidence of one prisoner's forgotten exploits.

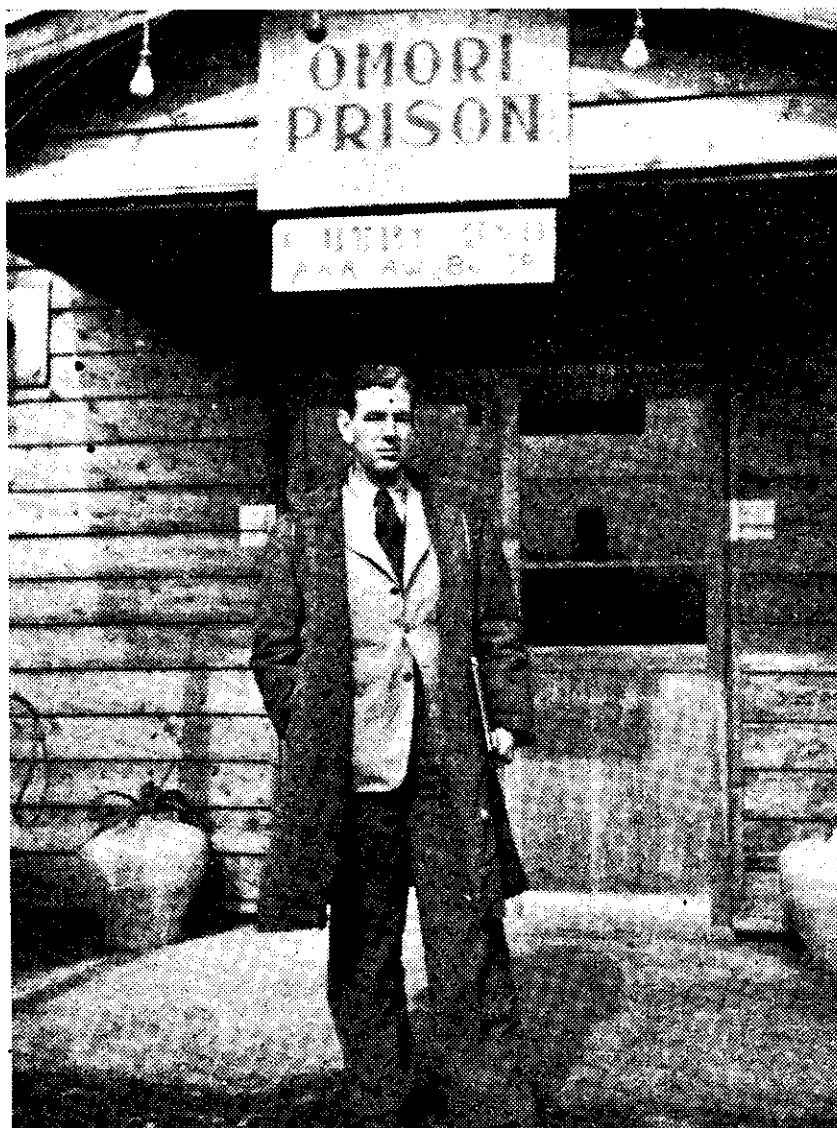
"Well, I'll be—" The cameraman got busy again, while the lieutenant chuckled over the story of Wilfie and his Red Cross parcels.\* I held up the wooden panels to the light.

"See any writing there?"

Tiny characters, scratched with the point of a nail—the verses I had tried to remember and put down on the walls

\*See "The Listener" July 19 and 26.

# CHINA CALLING



*CORSO, now making a major contribution to the relief of the Greeks, is about to deploy its forces on a wider front — China. Simultaneously with this development comes news of the appointment of JAMES BERTRAM (above) as CORSO's Dominion organiser. No one in New Zealand to-day knows better than he what we owe to the Chinese; no one is better qualified to speak for them—as he does in this account of his last visit to the Far East, when a member of the New Zealand delegation to the Far Eastern Commission*

of my cell during the long days of solitary confinement. Poetry has its uses; it had helped to keep me sane. And that was the only souvenir I wanted from Japan—two bits of pinewood from the wall of a cell. They could keep their samurai swords and their steel helmets.

Three days later I was sitting in a room in a villa in the old French Concession in Shanghai. Outside, beyond the foreign avenues, rose the distant rumour of the Chinese city; and that curious rustling—as of thick-packed human bodies—that is in the very air of China, even in her remotest provinces. But here it was very quiet, in this room where the portrait of Dr. Sun Yat-sen looked down from the wall, and a grave, soft-voiced Chinese woman was showing me some written scrolls.

"This is the first draft of the Constitution of the Chinese Republic, in my husband's own handwriting. . . . This is a collection of poems he made for me. This is the first official sword worn by

the President of China." I handled the relics with the reverence they deserved—tokens of one of the few really great men of our time.

"You know my old house in Shanghai?" Mme. Sun went on. "It is being restored, and I am presenting it to the Chinese nation as a Sun Yat-sen memorial museum. All these treasures will be placed there."

Then with a swift change of mood, and with a flash of the gaiety that still made her seem like a young girl—the girl who, on her way home from college in America, stopped in Japan to meet an old friend and found a life mission—Mme. Sun said to me, "But you must drink your coffee. And this is Hami melon; a pilot brought it to me from Sinkiang. It is the best melon in the world!"

### China Needs Our Aid

All through the long evening we talked of China, and of China's needs.

And watching that clear, beautiful face with its tragic eyes, I marvelled again at the serenity of this childless widow of the founder of the Chinese Republic, who since her husband's death has become the guardian of the things he fought for, and the mother of a whole people.

Chinese women have played a notable role in history, and there are many distinguished women leaders in China to-day, including the two other remarkable Soong sisters. But Mme. Sun Yat-sen stands a little apart from the rest. By her devotion to her husband's memory and her loyalty to the common Chinese people, by her personal integrity and some rare inner quality of spirit that is as easy to recognise as it is hard to define, she is China: and she can speak for her people as no one else can.

I had last seen her in Hong Kong, when Japanese shells were falling around us, and she had only with difficulty been persuaded to leave by the last plane, just twelve hours before the airfield fell to the advancing enemy. Since then she had been in Chungking, carrying on with her relief work on behalf of China's guerrilla fighters. Now in Shanghai she was Chairman of the China Welfare Fund Committee, still pledged to support the International Peace Hospitals that had been founded by Dr. Norman Bethune, the Canadian specialist who was the first foreign volunteer doctor to give his life for China on the northern battlefronts. And over the whole post-war Chinese scene, like a new nightmare piled upon past horrors, hung the shadow of civil war.

"More than ever before," Mme. Sun told me, "we need the help of our friends abroad. We need their help to prevent any further deterioration of the political situation. We need their help to relieve the terrible distress and suffering of the Chinese people, who have been fighting longer than anyone else against fascist aggression."

At that very moment, the Shanghai hotel where I was staying was filled with an impressive staff of UNRRA experts, and UNRRA goods and supplies were piling up in Shanghai go-downs. But complications of local authority and transport and a good deal of plain old-fashioned racketeering, were further confusing a confused situation. Not long after this an order from Mr. La Guardia blocked the shipment of UNRRA supplies to China, pending the clearing of the ports and a review of the whole relief set-up.

When I left that house in the rue Henri Rivière, I left with a private gift of the kind the Chinese make more gracefully than anyone else in the world—this was a silver cigarette-case with Mme. Sun's own initials engraved upon it. What could I give in return? It had to be something personal, and it had to be something I valued. So I gave her one of those pinewood panels from a Japanese prison-cell, on which I had inscribed a series of quotations on freedom. It was a poor thing, but it had some meaning.

"You are going back now to your own country," Mme. Sun told me as I left. "But I think you will return to China, to help us in our struggle for democracy and for peace. And I know that you will do what you can to get help from New Zealand for China in her need."

### Time Off for Typing

Back in Auckland, after I had made my report to the Government on the Far Eastern situation, almost against my own judgment I plunged into the writing of the book that was to tell my own