

WHAT JAPANESE OCCUPATION MEANS IN CHINA

Written for "The Listener" by BARBARA J. COLLINS, B.A. (Cantab.), late Education Department, Shanghai Municipal Council and accredited Lecturer for the China Relief Fund

IT is now possible, since the British-Japanese declaration of war, to describe what has been happening in occupied China in the last few years. As long as appeasement was our Far Eastern policy, frankness was not possible. But now we may speak—and I personally feel it my duty to speak plainly.

It does not seem to be generally realised in New Zealand that Shanghai went through four months of virtual siege while hostilities raged round and over the city, during which that part of the city occupied by the "protecting" Japanese troops, Hongkew, saw fierce fighting. Hostilities, it will be remembered, broke out suddenly. The actual fighting has been described in the press. Conditions afterwards have never been described. I will take only two instances. Down on Point Island a friend of mine, working in H.M. Office of Works had

ricating oil had been poured carefully over it so as to ruin all that remained. There was nothing left to salvage. The British flag was still flying.

him some months later, and asked him if he saved anything from his house or shop. His answer was: "Missie, I go back my shop, and find my father mur-



ABOVE: Air raids are much the same the world over. A scene in the Chinese district at Shanghai. LEFT: "Innocent civilians are taken out before your eyes to be shot"—Japanese marines round up suspects



dered at my shop door." The old man had obviously been trying to defend his property.

Everything Chinese and foreign in occupied territory was looted and put on to troopships to go back to Japan: gramophones, pianos, furniture, curios. Openly they were packed up as "military supplies" and taken away.

"Rape" of Nanking

The world has heard of the "rape" of Nanking, but I had exceptional opportunities of hearing what happened as I travelled across the Pacific in 1938 with John MacGee of the Baptist Mission in Nanking, and with Dr. Rosen of the German Embassy. I had the opportunity of seeing the script prepared for the film of the "rape" of Nanking which was shown privately at the White House and in our Houses of Parliament, a film of the actual happenings which was taken at great danger by an American in Nanking during its capture, and which was smuggled down to Shanghai by a British gunboat.

For three days the soldiers were allowed officially to go wild, but it lasted really for more than a month. Into the Mission Hospital scores of women were brought who had been so violently used by the soldiers that they came in to die.

It is in fact not possible to tell in print what happened, but I will quote a paragraph from a hitherto

a house. Before leaving it under machine gun fire he ran up the Union Jack to prevent his property from being looted. Point Island had never been occupied by the Chinese, but had been a supply base for the Japanese troops.

When he reached his home four months later he found that the door had been smashed in, that much of his furniture had been looted, that his pictures had been torn from the walls and trampled under foot, his stocks of wine and beer drunk and the bottles left lying about, and that what remained of his clothing had been heaped on the floor with his bedding, whiel thick lub-

Indescribable Conditions

In the Tubercular Hospital which belongs to the Shanghai Municipal Council, and which was outside the Settlement, the condition of the hospital was indescribable. Chairs, bedding, mattresses, the floors, drawers, the kitchens, all had been defiled in the most disgusting way.

The fate of the Chinese was worse. One incident will always remain with me. I had been in the habit of buying my fruit from an old vendor in the Hongkew district. With the hostilities he fled within the Settlement. I found



BARBARA J. COLLINS

unpublished letter of the late Miss Minnie Vautrim, who remained in Nanking during its fall at Ginling College and by her courage saved hundreds of Chinese women who took refuge there. this letter is dated Christmas, 1937, and was given to me by Mrs. Moodie of Hongkong:

"It is now Christmas Eve. I shall start with December 10. In these two short weeks we, here in Nanking, have been through a siege: the Chinese army has left defeated, and the Japanese have come in. On that day Nanking was still a beautiful city and we were proud of it, with law and order still prevailing: to-day it is a city laid waste, ravaged, completely looted, much of it burnt. Complete anarchy has reigned for ten days—it has been hell on earth. Not that my life has been in serious danger at any time, though turning lost-mad, drunken soldiers out of houses where they were raping women is not perhaps altogether a safe occupation; nor do you feel yourself too sure when you find a bayonet at your chest or a revolver at your head, and know that it is handled by someone who heartily wishes you out of the way.

"Wanted No Observers"

"For the Japanese army is anything but pleased at our being here after having advised all foreigners to get out. They wanted no observers. But to have to stand by while even the very poor are having their last possessions taken from them—their last coin, their last bit of bedding (and it is freezing weather), the poor rickshaw man his rickshaw, while thousands of disarmed soldiers who have sought sanctuary with you together with hundreds of innocent civilians are taken out before your eyes to be shot or used for bayonet practice and you have to listen to the sound of the guns that are killing them: while a thousand women kneel before you crying hysterically, begging you to save them from beasts who are preying on them: to stand by and do nothing while your flag is taken down and insulted not once but a dozen times, and your own home is being looted: and then to watch the city you have come to love and the institution to which you have planned to devote your best years deliberately and systematically burned by fire—this is a hell I have never before envisaged."

I need paint no further picture.