

PART I



# 1

## THE PATH TO NANKING



**I**N TRYING to understand the actions of the Japanese, the questions that call out loudest for answers are the most obvious ones. What broke down on the scene to allow the behavior of Japanese soldiers to escape so totally the restraints that govern most human conduct? Why did the Japanese officers permit and even encourage such a breakdown? What was the complicity of the Japanese government? At the very least, what was its reaction to the reports it was getting through its own channels and to what it was hearing from foreign sources on the scene?

To answer these questions we must begin with a little history.

The twentieth-century Japanese identity was forged in a thousand-year-old system in which social hierarchy was established and sustained through martial competition. For as far back as anyone could remember, the islands' powerful feudal lords employed private armies to wage incessant battle with each

other; by the medieval times these armies had evolved into the distinctively Japanese samurai warrior class, whose code of conduct was called *bushido* (the "Way of the Warrior"). To die in the service of one's lord was the greatest honor a samurai warrior could achieve in his lifetime.

Such codes of honor were certainly not invented by Japanese culture. The Roman poet Horace first defined the debt owed by the young men of each generation to their rulers—*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. But the samurai philosophy went a giant step beyond defining military service as fitting and proper. So harsh was its code that its most notable characteristic was the moral imperative that adherents commit suicide if ever they failed to meet honorably the obligations of military service—often with the highly ceremonial and extremely painful ritual of *hara-kiri*, in which the warrior met death by unflinchingly disemboweling himself in front of witnesses.

By the twelfth century the head of the reigning (and thereby most powerful) family, now called the Shogun, offered the emperor, who was worshiped as the direct descendant of the Sun Goddess, military protection of his samurai in exchange for divine sanction of the entire ruling class. A deal was struck. In time the code of the samurai, initially followed by only a small percentage of the population, penetrated deep into the Japanese culture and became the model of honorable behavior among all young men.

Time did not erode the strength of the *bushido* ethic, which first emerged in the eighteenth century and was practiced to extremes in the modern age. During World War II the infamous kamikaze suicide missions, in which Japanese pilots ceremoniously trained to fly their planes directly into American ships, dramatically impressed upon the West how ready the young men of Japan were to sacrifice their lives for the emperor. But it was more than a small elite group that held to the view of death over surrender. It is striking to note that while the Allied forces surrendered at the rate of 1 prisoner for every 3 dead, the Japanese surrendered at the rate of only 1 per 120 dead.

Another force that gave Japan its peculiar character was its

isolation, both physical and self-imposed. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries Japan was ruled by the Tokugawa clan, who sealed off the island nation from foreign influence. This seclusion, intended to provide security from the wider world, instead insulated Japanese society from the new technology of the industrial revolution taking place in Europe and left it less secure. For 250 years Japanese military technology failed to advance beyond the bow, sword, and musket.

By the nineteenth century events beyond Japan's control would knock the country out of its cocoon, leaving it in a state of insecurity and xenophobic desperation. In 1852, U.S. President Millard Fillmore, frustrated by Japan's refusal to open its ports to commerce and taking the "white man's burden" attitude toward other societies commonly espoused at the time to rationalize European expansionism, decided to end Japan's isolation by dispatching Commander Matthew Perry to the island. Perry studied Japanese history carefully and decided to shock the Japanese into submission with a massive display of American military force. In July 1853, he sent a flotilla of ships belching black smoke into Tokyo Bay—giving the people of Japan their first glimpse of steam power. Surrounding himself with some sixty to seventy aggressive-looking men armed with swords and pistols, Perry strode through the capital of the Shogun and demanded meetings with the highest-ranking officials in Japan.

To say that the Japanese were stunned by Perry's arrival would be a gross understatement. "A parallel situation," the historian Samuel Eliot Morison wrote of the incident, "would be an announcement by astronauts that weird-looking aircraft from outer space were on their way to earth." The terrified Tokugawa aristocracy prepared for battle, hid their valuables, and held panicked meetings among themselves. But in the end, they had no choice but to acknowledge the superiority of American military technology and to accept the mission. With this single visit, Perry not only forced the Tokugawa to sign treaties with the United States but broke down the doors of Japanese trade for other countries, such as Britain, Russia, Germany, and France.

The humiliation of this proud people left a residue of fierce resentment. Secretly some members of the Japanese power elite advocated immediate war with the Western powers, but others counseled prudence, arguing that war would weaken only Japan, not the foreigners. Those taking the latter position urged that the leadership placate the intruders, learn from them, and quietly plan their retaliation:

*As we are not the equals of foreigners in the mechanical arts, let us have intercourse with foreign countries, learn their drill and tactics, and when we have made the [Japanese] nations as united as one family, we shall be able to go abroad and give lands in foreign countries to those who have distinguished themselves in battle; the soldiers will vie with one another in displaying their intrepidity, and it will not be too late then to declare war.*

Although that view did not prevail, the words would prove prophetic, for they described not only the strategy the Japanese would follow but the long-term horizons of those who think of life in terms of the state and not of individuals.

With no clear course open to them, the Tokugawa decided to watch and wait—a decision that signed the death warrant of their reign. The Shogun's policy of appeasement, so different from what it required of its loyal adherents, disgusted many and supplied ammunition for its hawkish opponents, who saw the prudent response of the Shogun as nothing more than kowtowing servility before foreign barbarians. Convinced that the Shogun had lost his mandate to rule, rebel clans forged alliances to overthrow the regime and restore the emperor to power.

In 1868 the rebels achieved victory in the name of the Meiji emperor and ignited a revolution to transform a patchwork of warring fiefdoms into a modern, powerful Japan. They elevated the sun cult of Shinto to a state religion and used the emperor as a national symbol to sweep away tribalism and unite the islands. Determined to achieve eventual victory over the West, the new imperial government adopted the samurai ethic

of *bushido* as the moral code for all citizens. The foreign threat acted as a further catharsis for the islands. In an era later known as the Meiji Restoration, Japan resounded with nationalistic slogans, such as "Revere the Emperor! Expel the barbarians!" and "Rich country, strong army!"

With astonishing rapidity, the Japanese hurled themselves into the modern age—scientifically, economically, and militarily. The government sent the best students abroad to study science and technology at Western universities, seized control of its own industry to create factories for military production, and replaced the locally controlled feudal armies with a national conscript army. It also meticulously analyzed the defense cultures of the United States and Europe, favoring above all the German military system. But the knowledge of Western technology and defense strategies brought back by its foreign-educated students shattered the country's old confidence in Japanese military superiority, leaving it deeply uneasy about the inevitability of victory in its future showdown with the West.

By the late nineteenth century Japan was ready to flex its muscles, testing its new strength on Asian neighbors. In 1876 the Meiji government dispatched to Korea a naval force of two gunboats and three transports and forced the Korean government to sign a treaty of commerce—a move hauntingly reminiscent of what Perry had forced on Japan.

Then it clashed with China over Korea. An 1885 treaty had established Korea as a coprotectorate of both China and Japan, but hostilities broke out within a decade when the Chinese tried to quell a Korean rebellion backed by Japanese ultranationalists. In September 1894, only six weeks after war was declared, the Japanese not only captured Pyongyang but crushed the Chinese northern fleet at sea. The Qing government was forced to sign the humiliating Treaty of Shimonoseki, under which the Chinese were made to pay the Japanese 200 million taels in war indemnities and to cede to Japan Taiwan, the Pescadores, the Liaodong region of Manchuria,

and four more treaty ports. This was later called the first Sino-Japanese war.

For Japan the triumph would have been complete had it not been later marred by the intrusion of Western powers. After the war the Japanese won the greatest prize of the war—the Liaodong Peninsula—but were forced to surrender the last by the tripartite intervention of Russia, France, and Germany. This further illustration of the power of faraway European governments to dictate Japanese conduct only stiffened Japan's resolve to gain military supremacy over its Western tormentors. By 1904 the nation had doubled the size of its army and gained self-sufficiency in the production of armaments.

That strategy soon paid off. Japan was able to boast of defeating not only China in battle but Russia as well. In the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, the Japanese recapture of Port Arthur in the Liaodong Peninsula and naval victory at Tsushima gained half of the Sakhalin Islands and commercial supremacy in Manchuria. This was heady stuff for a proud country that had been chafing for fifty years under the humiliation dealt it by the Western nations. Giddy with triumph, a Japanese professor summed up the sentiments of his country when he declared that Japan was "destined to expand and govern other nations."

Largely because of these successes, the early part of the twentieth century was a euphoric time for Japan. Modernization had earned for the country not only military prestige but unprecedented economic prosperity. The First World War created a huge demand for Japanese steel and iron production as well as for Japanese textiles and foreign trade. Stock prices skyrocketed, and moguls sprang up from obscurity, dazzling the country with their extravagance. Even Japanese women—traditionally cloistered away in this male-dominated society—were seen gambling away fortunes at casinos and racetracks.

Perhaps if the prosperity had lasted, a solid middle class might have emerged in Japan to provide the people with the strength to check imperial military influence. But it did not. Instead, Japan would soon be faced with the single most disastrous economic crisis in its modern history—a crisis that

would wipe out its previous gains, push it to the brink of starvation, and propel it down the path of war.

The 1920s drew down the curtain on Japan's golden era of prosperity. When the end of World War I halted the previously insatiable demand for military products, Japanese munitions factories were shut down and thousands of laborers were thrown out of work. The 1929 stock market crash in the United States, and the depression that followed it, also reduced American purchases of luxuries, crippling the Japanese silk export trade.

As important, many international businessmen and consumers went out of their way to shun Japanese products in the postwar decade, even though Japan had been on the Allied side in the First World War. Although both the European nations and the Japanese expanded their overseas empires with the spoils of the First World War, Japanese expansion was not looked on in the same way. Repulsed by aggressive Japanese actions toward China through the first decades of the new century, and even more so by Japan's attempts at Western-style colonialism in the former German colonies it now controlled as a consequence of the war settlements, Western financiers began to invest more heavily in the Chinese. In turn, China, enraged by the Versailles decision to grant Japan the German rights and concessions in the Shantung Peninsula, organized widespread boycotts of Japanese goods. These developments hurt the Japanese economy still further and gave rise to the popular belief that Japan had once again become the victim of an international conspiracy.

The downturn in the economy devastated the average Japanese community. Businesses shut down, and unemployment soared. Destitute farmers and fishermen sold their daughters into prostitution. Soaring inflation, labor strikes, and a tremendous earthquake in September 1923 only exacerbated the dismal conditions.

An increasingly popular argument during the depression was that Japan needed to conquer new territory to ward off



mass starvation. The population had swollen from some 30 million at the time of the Meiji Restoration to almost 65 million in 1930, making it increasingly difficult for Japan to feed its people. With great effort, Japanese farmers had pushed up the yield per acre until it would increase no more, and by the 1920s agricultural production had leveled off. The continually expanding population forced Japan to rely heavily on imported foodstuffs every year, and between the 1910s and the end of the 1920s rice imports tripled. They had once been paid for by Japan's textile exports, but the latter were now subject to reduced foreign demand, intense competition, and often discriminatory tariffs.

By the 1920s young radicals in the Japanese army were arguing that military expansion was crucial to the country's survival. In his book *Addresses to Young Men*, Lieutenant Colonel Hashimoto Kingoro wrote:

There are only three ways left to Japan to escape from the pressures of surplus population . . . emigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory. The first door, emigration, has been barred to us by the anti-Japanese immigration policies of other countries. The second door . . . is being pushed shut by tariff barriers and the abrogation of commercial treaties. What should Japan do when two of the three doors have been closed against her?

Other Japanese writers pointed to the spacious territories of other countries, complaining about the injustice of it all, especially since these other countries were not making the most of their land by achieving the high per-acre yields that Japanese farmers had obtained. They looked enviously upon not only China's vast land resources but those of Western countries. Why, the military propagandist Araki Sadao asked, should Japan remain content with 142,270 square miles, much of it barren, to feed 60 million mouths, while countries like Australia and Canada had more than 3 million square miles to feed 6.5 million people each? These discrepancies were unfair. To the ultranationalists, the United States enjoyed some of the greatest advantages of all: Araki Sadao pointed out that the

United States possessed not only 3 million square miles of home territory but 700,000 square miles of colonies.

If expansion westward to the Pacific Ocean was the manifest destiny of the nineteenth-century United States, then China was twentieth-century Japan's manifest destiny. It was almost inevitable that this homogenous people of high personal esteem would see the socially fragmented and loosely governed expanse of China as having been put there for their use and exploitation. Nor were Japan's covetous intentions limited only to Asia. In 1925, just a short three years after Japan entered into a capital ship limitation treaty with the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy that afforded it a distinctive role as the world's third largest naval power, Okawa Shumei, a national activist, wrote a book that insisted not only on Japan's destiny to "free" Asia but also on the inevitability of world war between Japan and the United States. In the concluding chapter of his book, he was more prophetic than he realized when he predicted a divine—almost apocalyptic—struggle between the two powers: *"Before a new world appears, there must be a deadly fight between the powers of the West and the East. This theory is realized in the American challenge to Japan. The strongest country in Asia is Japan and the strongest country that represents Europe is America. . . . These two countries are destined to fight. Only God knows when it will be."*

By the 1930s the Japanese government found itself mired in intrigue as those who favored using Japan's newly acquired technological skills to build a better society competed for influence with those who wanted to use the nation's military superiority over its neighbors to embark on a program of foreign conquest. Expansionist ideologies gained fervent support from right-wing ultranationalists, who called for a military dictatorship that would limit personal wealth, nationalize property, and dominate Asia. These ideas fueled the ambitions of junior military officers, whose rural backgrounds and youth made them naturally distrustful of Tokyo politicians as well as impatient for immediate access to power. Though the officers feuded

among themselves, they shared a similar mission: to overhaul society and eliminate all bureaucratic, economic, and political obstacles to what they believed to be Japan's divine mission to avenge itself against the Europeans and dominate Asia.

Step by step, the interventionists forced a series of compromises from the moderate elements in government. But disappointed by the pace of change, they began to conspire among themselves to topple the government. In 1931 a coup was planned but abandoned. In 1932 a group of naval officers launched a terrorist attack in Tokyo that killed Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi but failed to secure martial law.

On February 26, 1936, a clique of young officers launched a bold coup d'état that took the lives of several statesmen. Though the coup paralyzed downtown Tokyo for more than three days, it ultimately failed and the ringleaders were jailed or executed. Power shifted from the extremists to a more cautious faction within the government, though it is important to point out that even this faction shared many of the young officers' fanatical views when it came to Japan's right to a dominant role in Asia.

It soon became apparent to some Japanese ultranationalists that if they wanted to control China they would have to move fast. For there were signs that China, forced to submit to Japanese demands in 1895, was trying to strengthen itself as a nation—signs that gave the Japanese expansionists a sense of urgency in their mission.

China had indeed used the past two decades to transform itself from a disintegrating empire into a struggling national republic. In 1911 rebel armies defeated the Qing imperial forces and ended more than two centuries of Manchu rule. During the 1920s the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek successfully fought the warlords of northern China to unify the country. They also announced as a goal the elimination of unfair treaty agreements foisted upon the Qing dynasty by foreign powers. As Chiang's movement gained momentum, it threatened Japanese interests in Manchuria and Mongolia. Something had to

be done, and quickly, before China grew too powerful to be conquered.

With the approval of the Japanese government, the military began to intervene more aggressively in Chinese affairs. In 1928 they engineered the assassination of Chang Tsolin, the warlord ruler of Manchuria, when he failed to give them his full cooperation. The murder only served to infuriate the Chinese people, who organized more boycotts against Japanese goods.

By the 1930s Japan had launched an undeclared war with China. On September 18, 1931, the Japanese army blew up the tracks of a Japanese-owned railway in southern Manchuria, hoping to incite an incident. When the blasts failed to derail an express train, the Japanese killed the Chinese guards instead and fabricated a story for the world press about Chinese saboteurs. This incident gave the Japanese an excuse to seize Manchuria, which was renamed Manchukuo and where the Japanese installed Pu Yi, the last emperor of China and heir of the Manchu dynasty, as puppet ruler. The seizure of Manchuria, however, generated anti-Japanese sentiment in China, which was whipped up by Nationalist activists. Feelings ran high on both sides and erupted in bloodshed in 1932 when a Shanghai mob attacked five Japanese Buddhist priests, leaving one of them dead. Japan immediately retaliated by bombing the city, killing tens of thousands of civilians. When the slaughter at Shanghai aroused worldwide criticism, Japan responded by isolating itself from the international community and withdrawing, in 1933, from the League of Nations.

To prepare for the inevitable war with China, Japan had spent decades training its men for combat. The molding of young men to serve in the Japanese military began early in life, and in the 1930s the martial influence seeped into every aspect of Japanese boyhood. Toy shops became virtual shrines to war, selling arsenals of toy soldiers, tanks, helmets, uniforms, rifles, anti-aircraft guns, bugles, and howitzers. Memoirs from that time describe preadolescent boys waging mock battles in the

streets, using bamboo poles as imaginary rifles. Some even tied logs of wood on their backs and fantasized about dying as "human bomb" heroes in suicide missions.

Japanese schools operated like miniature military units. Indeed, some of the teachers were military officers, who lectured students on their duty to help Japan fulfill its divine destiny of conquering Asia and being able to stand up to the world's nations as a people second to none. They taught young boys how to handle wooden models of guns, and older boys how to handle real ones. Textbooks became vehicles for military propaganda; one geography book even used the shape of Japan as justification for expansion: "We appear to be standing in the vanguard of Asia, advancing bravely into the Pacific. At the same time we appear ready to defend the Asian continent from outside attack." Teachers also instilled in boys hatred and contempt for the Chinese people, preparing them psychologically for a future invasion of the Chinese mainland. One historian tells the story of a squeamish Japanese schoolboy in the 1930s who burst into tears when told to dissect a frog. His teacher slammed his knuckles against the boy's head and yelled, "Why are you crying about one lousy frog? When you grow up you'll have to kill one hundred, two hundred chinks!"

(And yet with all this psychological programming the story is much more complicated. "There was a deep ambivalence in Japanese society about China," Oxford historian Rana Mitter observes. "It was not all racist contempt, as it was for the Koreans: on the one hand, they recognized China as a source of culture that they had drawn on heavily; on the other, they were exasperated by the mess that China was in by the early twentieth century. Ishiwara Kanji, architect of the Manchurian Incident of 1931, was a big fan of the 1911 Revolution. Many Chinese, including Sun Yatsen and Yuan Shikai, drew on Japanese help and training in the years before and after the 1911 Revolution. The Japanese also sponsored Boxer Indemnity Scholarships and Dojinkai hospitals for the Chinese, and scholars like Tokio Hashimoto genuinely appreciated Chinese culture. Japan's Foreign Office and army experts on China were often very well trained and knowledgeable about the country."

This knowledge and tempering, however, would rarely pass down to the ordinary soldier.)

The historical roots of militarism in Japanese schools stretched back to the Meiji Restoration. In the late nineteenth century the Japanese minister of education declared that schools were run not for the benefit of the students but for the good of the country. Elementary school teachers were trained like military recruits, with student-teachers housed in barracks and subjected to harsh discipline and indoctrination. In 1890 the Imperial Rescript on Education emerged; it laid down a code of ethics to govern not only students and teachers but every Japanese citizen. The Rescript was the civilian equivalent of Japanese military codes, which valued above all obedience to authority and unconditional loyalty to the emperor. In every Japanese school a copy of the Rescript was enshrined with a portrait of the emperor and taken out each morning to be read. It was reputed that more than one teacher who accidentally stumbled over the words committed suicide to atone for the insult to the sacred document.

By the 1930s the Japanese educational system had become regimented and robotic. A visitor to one of its elementary schools expressed pleasant surprise at seeing thousands of children waving flags and marching in unison in perfect lines; quite clearly the visitor had seen the discipline and order but not the abuse required to establish and maintain it. It was commonplace for teachers to behave like sadistic drill sergeants, slapping children across the cheeks, hitting them with their fists, or bludgeoning them with bamboo or wooden swords. Students were forced to hold heavy objects, sit on their knees, stand barefoot in the snow, or run around the playground until they collapsed from exhaustion. There were certainly few visits to the schools by indignant or even concerned parents.

The pressure to conform to authority intensified if the schoolboy decided to become a soldier. Vicious hazing and a relentless pecking order usually squelched any residual spirit of individualism in him. Obedience was touted as a supreme virtue, and a sense of individual self-worth was replaced by a sense of value as a small cog in the larger scheme of things. To

establish this sublimation of individuality to the common good, superior officers or older soldiers slapped recruits for almost no reason at all or beat them severely with heavy wooden rods. According to the author Iritani Toshio, officers often justified unauthorized punishment by saying, "I do not beat you because I hate you. I beat you because I care for you. Do you think I perform these acts with hands swollen and bloody in a state of madness?" Some youths died under such brutal physical conditions; others committed suicide; the majority became tempered vessels into which the military could pour a new set of life goals.

Training was no less grueling a process for aspiring officers. In the 1920s all army cadets had to pass through the Military Academy at Ichigaya. With its overcrowded barracks, unheated study rooms, and inadequate food, the place bore a greater resemblance to a prison than a school. The intensity of the training in Japan surpassed that of most Western military academies: in England an officer was commissioned after some 1,372 hours of classwork and 245 hours of private study, but in Japan the standards were 3,382 hours of classwork and 2,765 hours of private study. The cadets endured a punishing daily regimen of physical exercise and classes in history, geography, foreign languages, mathematics, science, logic, drawing, and penmanship. Everything in the curriculum was bent toward the goal of perfection and triumph. Above all the Japanese cadets were to adopt "a will which knows no defeat." So terrified were the cadets of any hint of failure that examination results were kept secret, to minimize the risk of suicide.

The academy was like an island to itself, sealed off from the rest of the world. The Japanese cadet enjoyed neither privacy nor any opportunity to exercise individual leadership skills. His reading material was carefully censored, and leisure time was nonexistent. History and science were distorted to project an image of the Japanese as a superrace. "During these impressionable years they have been walled off from all outside pleasures, interests or influences," one Western writer observed of the Japanese officers. "The atmosphere of the narrow groove along which they have moved has been saturated with a special

national and a special military propaganda. Already from a race psychologically far removed from us, they have been removed still further."

In the summer of 1937 Japan finally succeeded in provoking a full-scale war with China. In July a Japanese regiment, garrisoned by treaty in the Chinese city of Tientsin, had been conducting night maneuvers near the ancient Marco Polo Bridge. During a break several shots were fired at the Japanese in the darkness, and a Japanese soldier failed to appear during roll call. Using this incident as an excuse to exercise Japan's power in the region, Japanese troops advanced upon the Chinese fort of Wanping near the bridge and demanded that its gates be opened so that they could search for the soldier. When the Chinese commander refused, the Japanese shelled the fort.

By the end of July, Japan had tightened its grasp on the entire Tientsin-Peking region and by August the Japanese had invaded Shanghai. The second Sino-Japanese War was no longer reversible.

But conquering China proved to be a more difficult task than the Japanese anticipated. In Shanghai alone Chinese forces outnumbered the Japanese marines ten to one, and Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Nationalist government, had reserved his best troops for the battle. That August, while attempting to land thirty-five thousand fresh troops on the docks of Shanghai, the Japanese encountered their first setback. A hidden Chinese artillery emplacement opened fire and killed several hundred men, including a cousin of the Empress Nagako. For months the Chinese defended the metropolis with extraordinary valor. To the chagrin of the Japanese, the battle of Shanghai proceeded slowly, street by street, barricade by barricade.

In the 1930s, Japanese military leaders had boasted—and seriously believed—that Japan could conquer all of mainland China within three months. But when a battle in a single Chinese city alone dragged from summer to fall, and then from fall to winter, it shattered Japanese fantasies of an easy victory. Here,



this primitive people, illiterate in military science and poorly trained, had managed to fight the superior Japanese to a standstill. When Shanghai finally fell in November, the mood of the imperial troops had turned ugly, and many, it was said, lusted for revenge as they marched toward Nanking.

## 2

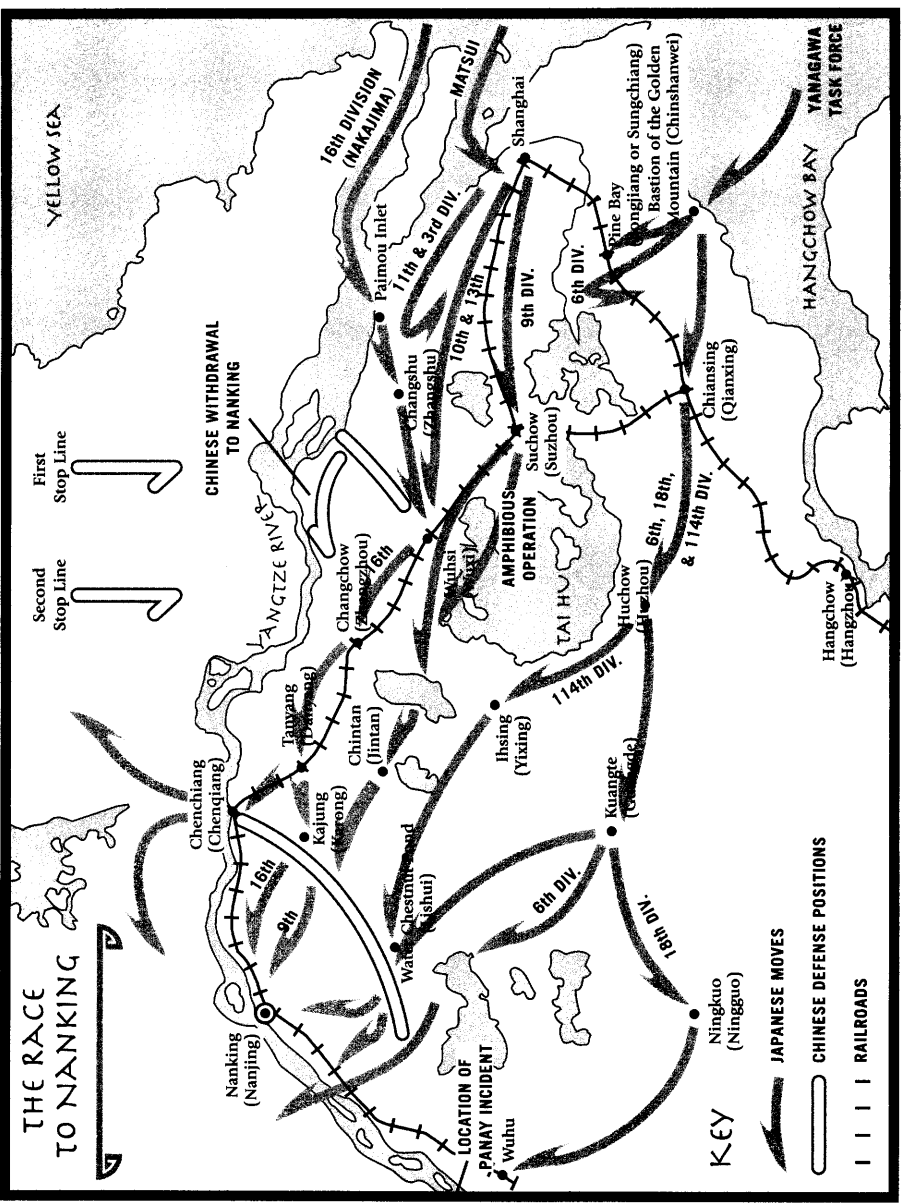
# SIX WEEKS OF TERROR



### THE RACE TO NANKING

**T**HE JAPANESE strategy for Nanking was simple. The imperial army exploited the fact that the city was blocked by water in two directions. The ancient capital lay south of a bend in the Yangtze River that first coursed northward and then turned to flow east. By converging upon Nanking in a semi-circular front from the southeast, the Japanese could use the natural barrier of the river to complete the encirclement of the capital and cut off all escape.

In late November, three parallel Japanese troops rushed toward Nanking. One force traveled west under the southern bank of the Yangtze River. Its troops poured into the Yangtze Delta, through the Paimou Inlet northwest of Shanghai, and along the Nanking-Shanghai railway, where the Japanese air force had already blasted away most of the bridges. These troops were led by Nakajima Kesago, who had worked as a



# THE RACE TO NANKING

Second Stop Line

First Stop Line

CHINESE WITHDRAWAL TO NANKING

YANGTZE RIVER

16th DIVISION (MATSUI)

11th & 3rd DIV.

MATSUI

AMPHIBIOUS OPERATION

TAI HU

9th DIV.

6th DIV.

6th, 18th, & 114th DIV.

114th DIV.

8th

YELLOW SEA

HANGCHOW BAY

YANAGAWA TASK FORCE

Nanking (Nanking)

Chienkiang (Chienkiang)

Wuhu (Wuhu)

Wuchow (Wuchow)

Ihsing (Yixing)

Kuangte (Kuangte)

Changchow (Zhangzhou)

Suchow (Suzhou)

Shanghai

Chiansing (Qiansing)

Hangchow (Hangzhou)

Wuchow (Wuchow)

Changshu (Zhangshu)

Palimou Inlet

Basin of the Golden Mountain (Chinshanwei)

LOCATION OF PANAY INCIDENT

Wuhu

Wuchow (Wuchow)

Wuchow (Wuchow)

Wuchow (Wuchow)

Wuchow (Wuchow)

Wuchow (Wuchow)

KEY

JAPANESE MOVES

CHINESE DEFENSE POSITIONS

RAILROADS

Ningkuo (Ningguo)

16th DIV.

6th DIV.

8th

114th DIV.

6th, 18th, & 114th DIV.

9th DIV.

10th & 13th

16th

8th

6th

114th

9th

10th & 13th

6th

8th

114th

9th

10th & 13th

6th

8th

114th

9th

16th

8th

6th

114th

9th

10th & 13th

6th

8th

114th

9th

10th & 13th

6th

8th

114th

9th

member of Japanese army intelligence in France and later as chief of the Japanese secret police for Emperor Hirohito. Not much has been written about Nakajima, but what has been written is overwhelmingly negative. David Bergamini, author of *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*, called him a "small Himmler of a man, a specialist in thought control, intimidation and torture" and quoted others describing Nakajima as a sadist who packed for his journey to Nanking special oil for burning bodies. Even his biographer, Kimura Kuninori, mentioned that Nakajima had been described as "a beast" and "a violent man."

Another force readied itself for a bold amphibious assault across Tai Hu, a lake situated halfway between Shanghai and Nanking. This force moved west from Shanghai in a route south of Nakajima's troops. Directing the movement was General Matsui Iwane, a frail, slight, tubercular man with a tiny mustache. Unlike Nakajima, Matsui was a devout Buddhist from a scholarly family. He was also the commander-in-chief of the Japanese imperial army for the entire Shanghai-Nanking region.

A third force traveled further south of Matsui's men and swerved northwest toward Nanking. Heading this force was Lieutenant General Yanagawa Heisuke, a bald, short man with literary interests. Perhaps to a greater degree than most other Japanese involved in the Rape of Nanking, his life during the invasion is veiled in mystery. According to his biographer, Sugawara Yutaka, the fascist clique that took control of the Japanese military had expelled Yanagawa from their ranks because he attempted to stop their 1932 coup. After his marginalization and demotion to the reserves, Yanagawa served as a commanding officer in China and performed "great military achievements . . . including the surrounding of Nanking," but the military withheld his name and photograph from publication at the time. Thus Yanagawa was known to many in Japan as "the masked shogun."

Little was spared on the path to Nanking. Japanese veterans remember raiding tiny farm communities, where they clubbed or bayoneted everyone in sight. But small villages were not the only casualties; entire cities were razed to the ground. Consider the example of Suchow (now called Suzhou), a city on the east bank

of Tai Hu Lake. One of the oldest cities of China, it was prized for its delicate silk embroidery, palaces, and temples. Its canals and ancient bridges had earned the city its Western nickname as "the Venice of China." On November 19, on a morning of pouring rain, a Japanese advance guard marched through the gates of Suchow, wearing hoods that prevented Chinese sentries from recognizing them. Once inside, the Japanese murdered and plundered the city for days, burning down ancient landmarks and abducting thousands of Chinese women for sexual slavery. The invasion, according to the *China Weekly Review*, caused the population of the city to drop from 350,000 to less than 500.

A British correspondent had the opportunity to record what was left of Pine River, (Sungchiang, a suburban city of Shanghai), nine weeks after the Japanese had passed through it. "There is hardly a building standing which has not been gutted by fire," he wrote. "Smoldering ruins and deserted streets present an eerie spectacle, the only living creatures being dogs unnaturally fattened by feasting on corpses. In the whole of Sungchiang, which should contain a densely packed population of approximately 100,000, I saw only five Chinese, who were old men, hiding in a French mission compound in tears."

#### ASAKA TAKES COMMAND

But the worst was still to come.

On December 7, as the Japanese troops zeroed in on Nanking, General Matsui grew feverishly ill in his field headquarters at Suchow—another flare-up of his chronic tuberculosis. The illness struck Matsui right when power shifted from his command to that of a member of the imperial family. Only five days earlier Emperor Hirohito had promoted Matsui out of the action while dispatching his own uncle, Prince Asaka Yasuhiko, to the front to replace him. Under the new order, Matsui would be in charge of the entire central China theater, while Asaka, a lieutenant general with a thirty-year tenure in the military, would take responsibility as the new commander-in-chief of the army around Nanking. As a member of the royal

family, Asaka possessed power that would override all other authority on the Nanking front. He was also closer to Lieutenant General Nakajima and General Yanagawa than to Matsui because he had spent three years in Paris with them as a military intelligence officer.

Little is known as to why Hirohito chose at this critical moment to give Asaka this position, though Bergamini believes it was done to test Asaka, who had sided with the emperor's brother Chichibu against Hirohito on a political issue during the February 1936 army mutiny. On the palace rolls, Hirohito had singled out Asaka as the one member of the royal family who possessed an attitude that was "not good" and apparently gave his uncle the appointment at Nanking as an opportunity to redeem himself.

At the time it seemed like a trivial change, but later, for the lives of hundreds of thousands of Chinese, it would prove to be a critical one.

It is hard to describe what really happened behind the scenes in the Japanese army because many of the details were given by Matsui and his colleagues years later at their war crimes trial, or by sources who may be unreliable, and they are therefore cited with caution. But if their testimony can be believed, this is what we learn. Wary of the imperial newcomer and the potential for abuse of power, Matsui issued a set of moral commandments for the invasion of Nanking. He ordered his armies to regroup a few kilometers outside the city walls, to enter the Chinese capital with only a few well-disciplined battalions, and to complete the occupation so that the army would "sparkle before the eyes of the Chinese and make them place confidence in Japan." He also called a meeting of staff officers before his sickbed and proclaimed:

The entry of the Imperial Army into a foreign capital is a great event in our history . . . attracting the attention of the world. Therefore let no unit enter the city in a disorderly fashion. . . . Let them know beforehand the matters to be remembered and the position of foreign rights and interests in the walled city. Let them be absolutely free from plunder. Dispose sentries

as needed. Plundering and causing fires, even carelessly, shall be punished severely. Together with the troops let many military police and auxiliary military police enter the walled city and thereby prevent unlawful conduct.

But events were brewing elsewhere over which Matsui had no control. On December 5, the story goes, Prince Asaka left Tokyo by plane and arrived on the front three days later. In an abandoned country villa near field headquarters some ten miles southeast of Nanking, Prince Asaka met with General Nakajima, his colleague from his Paris days, who was now recovering from a flesh wound in his left buttock. Nakajima told Asaka that the Japanese were about to surround three hundred thousand Chinese troops in the vicinity of Nanking and that preliminary negotiations revealed that they were ready to surrender.

After Asaka heard this report, it was said that his headquarters sent out a set of orders, under his personal seal, marked "Secret, to be destroyed." We now know that the clear message of these orders was: "KILL ALL CAPTIVES." What is not clear is whether Asaka himself issued the orders.\*

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\* Taisa Isamo, Asaka's staff officer for intelligence, later confessed to friends that on his own initiative he had forged the order. Another Japanese officer, Tanaka Ryukichi, said that in April 1938, Chou, then the head of the 74th wing of the Japanese army, told him an interesting tale. Chou told him that when his troops landed at Hangchow (or Hangzhou) Bay and pushed inland, nearly 300,000 Chinese troops were cut off from retreat, so they threw away their weapons and surrendered to the Japanese. "To arrange for so many prisoners, to feed them, was a huge problem," Chou reportedly said.

As the story goes, Chou seized upon a quick-fix solution to eliminate the food problem: "I immediately issued orders to all troops: 'We must entirely massacre these prisoners!' Using the name of the military commander, I sent these orders by telegram. The wording of the order was to annihilate."

We will never know if this story is true, but it must be noted that even if Chou had indeed forged the kill order on his own, this does not absolve Prince Asaka of responsibility for the massacre. Asaka could have issued an order to cancel the massacre once it started and court-martialed his intelligence officer.

By the time Japanese troops entered Nanking, an order to eliminate all Chinese captives had been not only committed to paper but distributed to lower-echelon officers. On December 13, 1937, the Japanese 66th Battalion received the following command:

BATTALION BATTLE REPORTER, AT 2:00 RECEIVED ORDER FROM THE REGIMENT COMMANDER: TO COMPLY WITH ORDERS FROM BRIGADE COMMANDING HEADQUARTERS, ALL PRISONERS OF WAR ARE TO BE EXECUTED. METHOD OF EXECUTION: DIVIDE THE PRISONERS INTO GROUPS OF A DOZEN. SHOOT TO KILL SEPARATELY.

3:30 P.M. A MEETING IS CALLED TO GATHER COMPANY COMMANDERS TO EXCHANGE OPINIONS ON HOW TO DISPOSE OF POWS. FROM THE DISCUSSION IT IS DECIDED THAT THE PRISONERS ARE TO BE DIVIDED EVENLY AMONG EACH COMPANY (1ST, 2ND AND 4TH COMPANY) AND TO BE BROUGHT OUT FROM THEIR IMPRISONMENT IN GROUPS OF 50 TO BE EXECUTED. 1ST COMPANY IS TO TAKE ACTION IN THE GRAIN FIELD SOUTH OF THE GARRISON; 2ND COMPANY TAKES ACTION IN THE DEPRESSION SOUTHWEST OF THE GARRISON; AND 4TH COMPANY TAKES ACTION IN THE GRAIN FIELD SOUTHEAST OF THE GARRISON.

THE VICINITY OF THE IMPRISONMENT MUST BE HEAVILY GUARDED. OUR INTENTIONS ARE ABSOLUTELY NOT TO BE DETECTED BY THE PRISONERS.

EVERY COMPANY IS TO COMPLETE PREPARATION BEFORE 5:00. EXECUTIONS ARE TO START BY 5:00 AND ACTION IS TO BE FINISHED BY 7:30.

There was a ruthless logic to the order. The captives could not be fed, so they had to be destroyed. Killing them would not only eliminate the food problem but diminish the possibility of retaliation. Moreover, dead enemies could not form up into guerrilla forces.



But executing the order was another matter. When the Japanese troops smashed through the walls in the early predawn hours of December 13, they entered a city in which they were vastly outnumbered. Historians later estimated that more than half a million civilians and ninety thousand Chinese troops were trapped in Nanking, compared to the fifty thousand Japanese soldiers who assaulted the city. General Nakajima knew that killing tens of thousands of Chinese captives was a formidable task: "To deal with crowds of a thousand, five thousand, or ten thousand, it is tremendously difficult even just to disarm them. . . . It would be disastrous if they were to make any trouble."

#### KILLING THE PRISONERS OF WAR

Because of their limited manpower, the Japanese relied heavily on deception. The strategy for mass butchery involved several steps: promising the Chinese fair treatment in return for an end to resistance, coaxing them into surrendering themselves to their Japanese conquerors, dividing them into groups of one to two hundred men, and then luring them to different areas near Nanking to be killed. Nakajima hoped that faced with the impossibility of further resistance, most of the captives would lose heart and comply with whatever directions the Japanese gave them.

All this was easier to achieve than the Japanese had anticipated. Resistance was sporadic; indeed, it was practically nonexistent. Having thrown away their arms when attempting to flee the city as the Japanese closed in, many Chinese soldiers simply turned themselves in, hoping for better treatment. Once the men surrendered and permitted their hands to be bound, the rest was easy.

Perhaps nowhere is the passivity of the Chinese soldiers better illustrated than in the diary of the former Japanese soldier Azuma Shiro, who described the surrender of thousands of Chinese troops shortly after the fall of Nanking. His own troops were assigning sentry and billet in a city square when

they suddenly received an order to round up about 20,000 prisoners of war.

Azuma and his countrymen walked some nine or ten miles in search of the prisoners. Night fell, and the Japanese finally heard a rumbling, froglike noise. They also saw numerous cigarette lights blinking in the darkness. "It was a magnificent view," Azuma wrote. "Seven thousand prisoners all in one place, gathering around the two white flags attached to a dead branch, which flew in the night sky." The prisoners were a ragged assortment of men wearing blue cotton military uniforms, blue cotton overcoats, and caps. Some covered their heads with blankets, some carried mat-rush sacks, and some carried futons on their backs. The Japanese lined the prisoners up into four columns, with the white flag at the head. This group of thousands of Chinese soldiers had waited patiently for the Japanese to fetch them and direct them to the next step in the surrender process.

The reluctance of the Chinese army to fight back stunned Azuma. To a man who came from a military culture in which pilots were given swords instead of parachutes, and in which suicide was infinitely preferable to capture, it was incomprehensible that the Chinese would not fight an enemy to the death. His contempt for the Chinese deepened when he discovered that the prisoners' numbers exceeded those of the captors.

"It was funny yet pitiable when I imagined how they gathered whatever white cloth they could find, attached it to a dead twig, and marched forward just to surrender," Azuma wrote.

I thought, how could they become prisoners, with the kind of force they had—more than two battalions—and without even trying to show any resistance. There must have been a considerable number of officers for this many troops, but not a single one remained, all of them having slipped away and escaped, I thought. Although we had two companies, and those seven thousand prisoners had already been disarmed, our troops could have been annihilated had they decided to rise up and revolt.

A welter of emotions filled Azuma. He felt sorry for the Chinese soldiers, thirsty and frightened men who constantly asked for water and reassurance that they would not be killed. But at the same time their cowardice disgusted him. Azuma suddenly felt ashamed for ever having been secretly afraid of the Chinese in previous battles, and his automatic impulse was to dehumanize the prisoners by comparing them to insects and animals.

They all walked in droves, like ants crawling on the ground. They looked like a bunch of homeless people, with ignorant expressions on their faces.

A herd of ignorant sheep, with no rule or order, marched on in the darkness, whispering to each other.

They hardly looked like the enemy who only yesterday was shooting at and troubling us. It was impossible to believe that they were the enemy soldiers.

It felt quite foolish to think we had been fighting to the death against these ignorant slaves. And some of them were even twelve- or thirteen-year-old boys.

The Japanese led the prisoners to a nearby village. Azuma recalled that when some of the Chinese were herded into a large house, they hesitated to enter, looking upon the place as if it were "a slaughter house." But finally they gave in and filed through the gate. Some of the prisoners struggled with the Japanese only when the latter tried to take away their blankets and bedding. The next morning Azuma and his comrades received an order to patrol another area; they later learned that while they were on patrol the Chinese prisoners had been assigned to companies in groups of two to three hundred, then killed.

Probably the single largest mass execution of prisoners of war during the Rape of Nanking took place near Mufu Mountain. The mountain lay directly north of Nanking, between the city and the south bank of the Yangtze River; an estimated fifty-seven thousand civilians and former soldiers were executed.

The killing proceeded in stealth and in stages. On December 16, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper correspondent Yokoto re-

ported that the Japanese had captured 14,777 soldiers near the artillery forts of Wulong Mountain and Mufu Mountain and that the sheer number of the prisoners posed problems. "The [Japanese] army encountered great difficulties since this was the first time that such a huge number of POWs were captured," Yokoto wrote. "There were not enough men to handle them."

According to Kurihara Riichi, a former Japanese army corporal who kept diaries and notes of the event, the Japanese disarmed thousands of prisoners, stripped them of everything but their clothes and blankets, and escorted them to a row of straw-roofed temporary buildings. When the Japanese military received orders on December 17 to kill the prisoners, they proceeded with extra caution. That morning the Japanese announced that they were going to transport the Chinese prisoners to Baguazhou, a small island in the middle of the Yangtze River. They explained to the captives that they needed to take special precautions for the move and bound the captives' hands behind their backs—a task that took all morning and most of the afternoon.

Sometime between 4:00 and 6:00 P.M., the Japanese divided the prisoners into four columns and marched them to the west, skirting the hills and stopping at the riverbank. "After three or four hours waiting and not knowing what was going on, the prisoners could not see any preparations for crossing the river," the corporal wrote. "It was then growing dark. They did not know . . . that Japanese soldiers already encircled them in a crescent formation along the river and they were in the sights of many machine guns."

By the time the executions began, it was too late for the Chinese to escape. "Suddenly all kinds of guns fired at once," Kurihara Riichi wrote. "The sounds of these firearms mingled with desperate yelling and screams." For an hour the Chinese struggled and thrashed about desperately, until there were few sounds still coming from the group. From evening until dawn the Japanese bayoneted the bodies, one by one.

Body disposal posed a mammoth problem for the Japanese. Only a fraction of the total number of men who perished in

and around Nanking were slaughtered at Mufu Mountain, yet the cleanup there took days. Burial was one method of disposal, but General Nakajima complained in his diary that it was hard to locate ditches large enough to bury heaps of seven to eight thousand corpses. Cremation was another, but the Japanese often lacked sufficient fuel to do a proper job. After the Mufu Mountain massacre, for instance, the Japanese poured large drums of gasoline on the bodies to burn them, but the drums ran out before fires could reduce the remains to ashes. "The result was a mountain of charred corpses," a Japanese corporal wrote.

Many bodies were simply dumped into the Yangtze River.

#### THE MURDER OF CIVILIANS

After the soldiers surrendered en masse, there was virtually no one left to protect the citizens of the city. Knowing this, the Japanese poured into Nanking on December 13, 1937, occupying government buildings, banks, and warehouses, shooting people randomly in the streets, many of them in the back as they ran away. Using machine guns, revolvers, and rifles, the Japanese fired at the crowds of wounded soldiers, elderly women, and children who gathered in the North Chungshan and Central roads and nearby alleys. They also killed Chinese civilians in every section of the city: tiny lanes, major boulevards, mud dugouts, government buildings, city squares. As victims toppled to the ground, moaning and screaming, the streets, alleys, and ditches of the fallen capital ran rivers of blood, much of it coming from people barely alive, with no strength left to run away.

The Japanese systematically killed the city dwellers as they conducted house-to-house searches for Chinese soldiers in Nanking. But they also massacred the Chinese in the nearby suburbs and countryside. Corpses piled up outside the city walls, along the river (which had literally turned red with blood), by ponds and lakes, and on hills and mountains. In villages near Nanking, the Japanese shot down any young man

who passed, under the presumption that he was likely to be a former Chinese soldier. But they also murdered people who could not possibly be Chinese soldiers—elderly men and women, for instance—if they hesitated or even if they failed to understand orders, delivered in the Japanese language, to move this way or that.

During the last ten days of December, Japanese motorcycle brigades patrolled Nanking while Japanese soldiers shouldering loaded rifles guarded the entrances to all the streets, avenues, and alleys. Troops went from door to door, demanding that the doors be opened to welcome the victorious armies. The moment the shopkeepers complied, the Japanese opened fire on them. The imperial army massacred thousands of people in this manner and then systematically looted the stores and burned whatever they had no use for.

#### THE JAPANESE JOURNALISTS

These atrocities shocked many of the Japanese correspondents who had followed the troops to Nanking. A horrified *Mainichi Shimbun* reporter watched the Japanese line up Chinese prisoners on top of the wall near Chungshan Gate and charge at them with bayonets fixed on rifles. "One by one the prisoners fell down to the outside of the wall," the reporter wrote. "Blood splattered everywhere. The chilling atmosphere made one's hair stand on end and limbs tremble with fear. I stood there at a total loss and did not know what to do."

He was not alone in his reaction. Many other reporters—even seasoned war correspondents—recoiled at the orgy of violence, and their exclamations found their way into print. From Imai Masatake, a Japanese military correspondent:

On Hsiakwan wharves, there was the dark silhouette of a mountain made of dead bodies. About fifty to one hundred people were toiling there, dragging bodies from the mountain of corpses and throwing them into the Yangtze River. The bodies dripped blood, some of them still alive and moaning

weakly, their limbs twitching. The laborers were busy working in total silence, as in a pantomime. In the dark one could barely see the opposite bank of the river. On the pier was a field of glistening mud under the moon's dim light. Wow! That's all blood!

After a while, the coolies had done their job of dragging corpses and the soldiers lined them up along the river. Rat-tat-tat machine-gun fire could be heard. The coolies fell backwards into the river and were swallowed by the raging currents. The pantomime was over.

A Japanese officer at the scene estimated that 20,000 persons had been executed.

From the Japanese military correspondent Omata Yukio, who saw Chinese prisoners brought to Hsiakwan and lined up along the river:

Those in the first row were beheaded, those in the second row were forced to dump the severed bodies into the river before they themselves were beheaded. The killing went on non-stop, from morning until night, but they were only able to kill 2,000 persons in this way. The next day, tired of killing in this fashion, they set up machine guns. Two of them raked a cross-fire at the lined-up prisoners. Rat-tat-tat-tat. Triggers were pulled. The prisoners fled into the water, but no one was able to make it to the other shore.

From the Japanese photojournalist Kawano Hiroki:

Before the "Ceremony of Entering the City," I saw fifty to one hundred bodies drifting down the Yangtze River. Did they die in battle, or were they killed after being taken prisoner? Or were they slaughtered civilians?

I remember there was a pond just outside Nanking. It looked like a sea of blood—with splendid colors. If only I had color film . . . what a shocking shot that would have been!

Sasaki Motomasa, a Japanese military correspondent at Nanking, observed, "I've seen piled-up bodies in the Great Quake in Tokyo, but nothing can be compared to this."

## THE RAPE OF NANKING

Next, the Japanese turned their attention to the women.

"Women suffered most," Takokoro Kozo, a former soldier in the 114th Division of the Japanese army in Nanking, recalled. "No matter how young or old, they all could not escape the fate of being raped. We sent out coal trucks from Hsiakwan to the city streets and villages to seize a lot of women. And then each of them was allocated to 15 to 20 soldiers for sexual intercourse and abuse."

Surviving Japanese veterans claim that the army had officially outlawed the rape of enemy women. But rape remained so deeply embedded in Japanese military culture and superstition that no one took the rule seriously. Many believed that raping virgins would make them more powerful in battle. Soldiers were even known to wear amulets made from the pubic hair of such victims, believing that they possessed magical powers against injury.

The military policy forbidding rape only encouraged soldiers to kill their victims afterwards. During an interview for the documentary *In the Name of the Emperor*, Azuma Shiro, a former Japanese soldier, spoke candidly about the process of rape and murder in Nanking:

At first we used some kinky words like *Pikankan*. *Pi* means "hip," *kankan* means "look." *Pikankan* means, "Let's see a woman open up her legs." Chinese women didn't wear underpants. Instead, they wore trousers tied with a string. There was no belt. As we pulled the string, the buttocks were exposed. We "pikankan." We looked. After a while we would say something like, "It's my day to take a bath," and we took turns raping them. It would be all right if we only raped them. I shouldn't say all right. But we always stabbed and killed them. Because dead bodies don't talk.

Takokoro Kozo shared Azuma's bluntness in discussing the issue. "After raping, we would also kill them," he recalled. "Those women would start to flee once we let them go. Then we would 'bang!' shoot them in the back to finish them up."



According to surviving veterans, many of the soldiers felt remarkably little guilt about this. "Perhaps when we were raping her, we looked at her as a woman," Azuma wrote, "but when we killed her, we just thought of her as something like a pig."

This behavior was not restricted to soldiers. Officers at all levels indulged in the orgy. (Even Tani Hisao, the senior general and commander of the Japanese 6th Division, was later found guilty of raping some twenty women in Nanking.) Some not only urged soldiers to commit gang rape in the city but warned them to dispose of the women afterwards to eliminate evidence of the crime. "Either pay them money or kill them in some out-of-the-way place after you have finished," one officer told his underlings.

#### THE ARRIVAL OF MATSUI IWANE

The killing and raping subsided when Matsui Iwane, still weak from his illness, entered the city on the morning of December 17 for a ceremonial parade. After recovering from his bout of tuberculosis, he traveled upriver on a naval launch and rode by car to the triple archway of the Mountain Gate on the east side of Nanking. There he mounted a chestnut horse, wheeled it to face the direction of the imperial palace in Tokyo, and led a triple banzai for the emperor for Japan's national radio broadcasting company: "Great Field Marshal on the Steps of Heaven—banzai—ten thousand years of life!" He rode down a boulevard that was carefully cleared of dead bodies and flanked by tens of thousands of cheering soldiers and arrived at the Metropolitan Hotel in the northern part of town, which held a banquet for Matsui that evening.

It was sometime during this banquet, the record suggests, that Matsui suspected that something had gone terribly amiss at Nanking. That evening he called a staff conference and ordered all unnecessary troops transferred out of the city. The next day the Western news media reported that the Japanese army was engaged in a giant conspiracy of silence against Mat-

sui to prevent him from knowing the full truth of the Nanking atrocities.

When Matsui began to comprehend the full extent of the rape, murder, and looting in the city, he showed every sign of dismay. On December 18, 1937, he told one of his civilian aides: "I now realize that we have unknowingly wrought a most grievous effect on this city. When I think of the feelings and sentiments of many of my Chinese friends who have fled from Nanking and of the future of the two countries, I cannot but feel depressed. I am very lonely and can never get in a mood to rejoice about this victory." He even let a tinge of regret flavor the statement he released to the press that morning: "I personally feel sorry for the tragedies to the people, but the Army must continue unless China repents. Now, in the winter, the season gives time to reflect. I offer my sympathy, with deep emotion, to a million innocent people."

Later that day, when the Japanese command held a burial service for the Japanese soldiers who died during the invasion, Matsui rebuked the three hundred officers, regimental commanders, and others on the grounds for the orgy of violence in the city. "Never before," Matsumoto, a Japanese correspondent wrote, "had a superior given his officers such a scathing reprimand. The military was incredulous at Matsui's behavior because one of the officers present was a prince of Imperial descent."

By Sunday, December 19, Matsui was moved to Asaka's headquarters outside the city and put on a destroyer the following day to be sent back to Shanghai. But once there he made an even more shocking move, one perhaps driven by desperation: he confided his worries to the *New York Times* and even told an American foreign correspondent that "the Japanese army is probably the most undisciplined army in the world today." That month he also sent a bold message to Prince Asaka's chief of staff. "It is rumored that unlawful acts continue," he wrote. "Especially because Prince Asaka is our commander, military discipline and morals must be that much more strictly maintained. Anyone who misconducts himself must be severely punished."

On New Year's Day, Matsui was still upset about the behavior of the Japanese soldiers at Nanking. Over a toast he confided to a Japanese diplomat: "My men have done something very wrong and extremely regrettable."

But the raping went on, and the killing went on. Matsui seemed incapable of stopping it. If one can believe the story Matsui told years later, his brief visit to Nanking even reduced him to tears in front of his colleagues. "Immediately after the memorial services, I assembled the higher officers and wept tears of anger before them," Matsui told his Buddhist confessor before his hanging in 1948. "Both Prince Asaka and Lieutenant General Yanagawa . . . were there. I told them everything had been lost in one moment through the brutalities of the soldiers. And can you imagine it, even after that, those soldiers laughed at me."

#### THE COMFORT WOMEN: THE LEGACY OF NANKING

One of the most bizarre consequences of the wholesale rape that took place at Nanking was the response of the Japanese government to the massive outcry from Western nations. Rather than stifle or punish the soldiers responsible, the Japanese high command made plans to create a giant underground system of military prostitution—one that would draw into its web hundreds of thousands of women across Asia. "The Japanese Expeditionary Force in Central China issued an order to set up comfort houses during this period of time," Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a prominent history professor at Chuo University, observes, "because Japan was afraid of criticism from China, the United States of America and Europe following the cases of massive rapes between battles in Shanghai and Nanking."

The plan was straightforward. By luring, purchasing, or kidnapping between eighty thousand and two hundred thousand women—most of them from the Japanese colony of Korea but many also from China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia—the Japanese military hoped to reduce the incidence of

random rape of local women (thereby diminishing the opportunity for international criticism), to contain sexually transmitted diseases through the use of condoms, and to reward soldiers for fighting on the battlefield for long stretches of time. Later, of course, when the world learned of this plan, the Japanese government refused to acknowledge responsibility, insisting for decades afterwards that private entrepreneurs, not the imperial government, ran the wartime military brothels. But in 1991 Yoshimi Yoshiaki unearthed from the Japanese Defense Agency's archives a document entitled "Regarding the Recruitment of Women for Military Brothels." The document bore the personal stamps of leaders from the Japanese high command and contained orders for the immediate construction of "facilities of sexual comfort" to stop troops from raping women in regions they controlled in China.

The first official comfort house opened near Nanking in 1938. To use the word *comfort* in regard to either the women or the "houses" in which they lived is ludicrous, for it conjures up spa images of beautiful geisha girls strumming lutes, washing men, and giving them shiatsu massages. In reality, the conditions of these brothels were sordid beyond the imagination of most civilized people. Untold numbers of these women (whom the Japanese called "public toilets") took their own lives when they learned their destiny; others died from disease or murder. Those who survived suffered a lifetime of shame and isolation, sterility, or ruined health. Because most of the victims came from cultures that idealized chastity in women, even those who survived rarely spoke after the war—most not until very recently—about their experiences for fear of facing more shame and derision. Asian Confucianism—particularly Korean Confucianism—upheld female purity as a virtue greater than life and perpetuated the belief that any woman who could live through such a degrading experience and not commit suicide was herself an affront to society. Hence, half a century passed before a few of the comfort women found the courage to break their silence and to seek financial compensation from the Japanese government for their suffering.

## THE MOTIVES BEHIND NANKING

Now we come to the most disturbing question of all—the state of the Japanese mind in Nanking. What was inside the mind of the teenage soldier handed a rifle and bayonet that propelled him to commit such atrocities?

Many scholars have wrestled with this question and found it almost impossible to answer. Theodore Cook, who coauthored the book *Japan at War: An Oral History* with his wife Haruko Taya Cook, admits that the brutality of the Rape of Nanking baffles him. He finds no parallels in the history of civil war in Japan; rather, systematic destruction and mass slaughter of urban populations appear to be part of Mongol rather than Japanese history. Trying to examine the mind-set of the Japanese at Nanking, he said, was like peering into “a black hole.”

Many find it difficult to reconcile the barbarism of Nanking with the exquisite politeness and good manners for which the Japanese are renowned. But certain military experts believe that these two seemingly separate behaviors are in reality entwined. They point to the awesome status of the ancient samurai, who for centuries possessed the power to lop off the head of a peasant if he failed to give the warrior a polite answer to his questions. “To this day,” an American naval intelligence officer wrote of Japanese culture during World War II, “the Japanese idea of a polite answer is one satisfactory to the questioner. Is it surprising that good manners are a national trait with the Japanese?”

Other experts have attributed Japanese wartime atrocities to Japanese culture itself. In her book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict wrote that because moral obligations in Japanese society were not universal but local and particularized, they could be easily broken on foreign soil. Other experts blame the non-Christian nature of Japanese religion, claiming that while Christianity puts forth the idea that all humans are brothers—indeed, that all things were created in God’s image—Shintoism in Japan purports that only the emperor and his descendants were created in God’s image. Citing such differences, these experts have con-

cluded that some cultures, however sophisticated they become, remain at their core tribal, in that the obligations the individual owes to others within the tribe are very different from those owed to outsiders.

There is an inherent danger in this assumption, for it has two implications: one, that the Japanese, by virtue of their religion, are naturally less humane than Western cultures and must be judged by different standards (an implication I find both irresponsible and condescending), and two, that Judeo-Christian cultures are somehow less capable of perpetrating atrocities like the Rape of Nanking. Certainly Nazis in Germany, a devoutly Christian country, found a way in the 1930s and 1940s to dehumanize the German psyche and even demonize peoples they had declared to be enemies of the Germans. What resulted were some of the worst crimes against humanity this planet has ever seen.

Looking back upon millennia of history, it appears clear that no race or culture has a monopoly on wartime cruelty. The veneer of civilization seems to be exceedingly thin—one that can be easily stripped away, especially by the stresses of war.

How then do we explain the raw brutality carried out day after day after day in the city of Nanking? Unlike their Nazi counterparts, who have mostly perished in prisons and before execution squads or, if alive, are spending their remaining days as fugitives from the law, many of the Japanese war criminals are still alive, living in peace and comfort, protected by the Japanese government. They are therefore some of the few people on this planet who, without concern for retaliation in a court of international law, can give authors and journalists a glimpse of their thoughts and feelings while committing World War II atrocities.

Here is what we learn. The Japanese soldier was not simply hardened for battle in China; he was hardened for the task of murdering Chinese combatants and noncombatants alike. Indeed, various games and exercises were set up by the Japanese military to numb its men to the human instinct against killing people who are not attacking.

For example, on their way to the capital, Japanese soldiers

were made to participate in killing competitions, which were avidly covered by the Japanese media like sporting events. The most notorious one appeared in the December 7 issue of the *Japan Advertiser* under the headline "Sub-Lieutenants in Race to Fell 100 Chinese Running Close Contest."

Sub-Lieutenant Mukai Toshiaki and Sub-Lieutenant Noda Takeshi, both of the Katagiri unit at Kuyung, in a friendly contest to see which of them will first fell 100 Chinese in individual sword combat before the Japanese forces completely occupy Nanking, are well in the final phase of their race, running almost neck to neck. On Sunday [December 5] . . . the "score," according to the *Asahi*, was: Sub-Lieutenant Mukai, 89, and Sub-Lieutenant Noda, 78.

A week later the paper reported that neither man could decide who had passed the 100 mark first, so they upped the goal to 150. "Mukai's blade was slightly damaged in the competition," the *Japan Advertiser* reported. "He explained that this was the result of cutting a Chinese in half, helmet and all. The contest was 'fun' he declared."

Such atrocities were not unique to the Nanking area. Rather, they were typical of the desensitization exercises practiced by the Japanese across China during the entire war. The following testimony by a Japanese private named Tajima is not unusual:

One day Second Lieutenant Ono said to us, "You have never killed anyone yet, so today we shall have some killing practice. You must not consider the Chinese as a human being, but only as something of rather less value than a dog or cat. Be brave! Now, those who wish to volunteer for killing practice, step forward."

No one moved. The lieutenant lost his temper.

"You cowards!" he shouted. "Not one of you is fit to call himself a Japanese soldier. So no one will volunteer? Well then, I'll order you." And he began to call out names, "Otani—Furukawa—Ueno—Tajima!" (My God—me too!)

I raised my bayoneted gun with trembling hands, and—directed by the lieutenant's almost hysterical cursing—I walked slowly towards the terror-stricken Chinese standing beside the

pit—the grave he had helped to dig. In my heart, I begged his pardon, and—with my eyes shut and the lieutenant's curses in my ears—I plunged the bayonet into the petrified Chinese. When I opened my eyes again, he had slumped down into the pit. "Murderer! Criminal!" I called myself.

For new soldiers, horror was a natural impulse. One Japanese wartime memoir describes how a group of green Japanese recruits failed to conceal their shock when they witnessed seasoned soldiers torture a group of civilians to death. Their commander expected this reaction and wrote in his diary: "All new recruits are like this, but soon they will be doing the same things themselves."

But new officers also required desensitization. A veteran officer named Tominaga Shozo recalled vividly his own transformation from innocent youth to killing machine. Tominaga had been a fresh second lieutenant from a military academy when assigned to the 232nd Regiment of the 39th Division from Hiroshima. When he was introduced to the men under his command, Tominaga was stunned. "They had evil eyes," he remembered. "They weren't human eyes, but the eyes of leopards or tigers."

On the front Tominaga and other new candidate officers underwent intensive training to stiffen their endurance for war. In the program an instructor had pointed to a thin, emaciated Chinese in a detention center and told the officers: "These are the raw materials for your trial of courage." Day after day the instructor taught them to how to cut off heads and bayonet living prisoners.

On the final day, we were taken out to the site of our trial. Twenty-four prisoners were squatting there with their hands tied behind their backs. They were blindfolded. A big hole had been dug—ten meters long, two meters wide, and more than three meters deep. The regimental commander, the battalion commanders, and the company commanders all took the seats arranged for them. Second Lieutenant Tanaka bowed to the regimental commander and reported, "We shall now begin." He ordered a soldier on fatigue duty to haul one of the prisoners



to the edge of the pit; the prisoner was kicked when he resisted. The soldiers finally dragged him over and forced him to his knees. Tanaka turned toward us and looked into each of our faces in turn. "Heads should be cut off like this," he said, unsheathing his army sword. He scooped water from a bucket with a dipper, then poured it over both sides of the blade. Swishing off the water, he raised his sword in a long arc. Standing behind the prisoner, Tanaka steadied himself, legs spread apart, and cut off the man's head with a shout, "Yo!" The head flew more than a meter away. Blood spurted up in two fountains from the body and sprayed into the hole.

The scene was so appalling that I felt I couldn't breathe.

But gradually, Tominaga Shozo learned to kill. And as he grew more adept at it, he no longer felt that his men's eyes were evil. For him, atrocities became routine, almost banal. Looking back on his experience, he wrote: "We made them like this. Good sons, good daddies, good elder brothers at home were brought to the front to kill each other. Human beings turned into murdering demons. Everyone became a demon within three months."

Some Japanese soldiers admitted it was easy for them to kill because they had been taught that next to the emperor, all individual life—even their own—was valueless. Azuma Shiro, the Japanese soldier who witnessed a series of atrocities in Nanking, made an excellent point about his comrades' behavior in his letter to me. During his two years of military training in the 20th Infantry Regiment of Kyoto-fu Fukuchi-yama, he was taught that "loyalty is heavier than a mountain, and our life is lighter than a feather." He recalled that the highest honor a soldier could achieve during war was to come back dead: to die for the emperor was the greatest glory, to be caught alive by the enemy the greatest shame. "If my life was not important," Azuma wrote to me, "an enemy's life became inevitably much less important. . . . This philosophy led us to look down on the enemy and eventually to the mass murder and ill treatment of the captives."

In interview after interview, Japanese veterans from the Nanking massacre reported honestly that they experienced a

complete lack of remorse or sense of wrongdoing, even when torturing helpless civilians. Nagatomi Hakudo spoke candidly about his emotions in the fallen capital:

I remember being driven in a truck along a path that had been cleared through piles of thousands and thousands of slaughtered bodies. Wild dogs were gnawing at the dead flesh as we stopped and pulled a group of Chinese prisoners out of the back. Then the Japanese officer proposed a test of my courage. He unsheathed his sword, spat on it, and with a sudden mighty swing he brought it down on the neck of a Chinese boy cowering before us. The head was cut clean off and tumbled away on the ground as the body slumped forward, blood spurt- ing in two great gushing fountains from the neck. The officer suggested I take the head home as a souvenir. I remember smiling proudly as I took his sword and began killing people.

After almost sixty years of soul-searching, Nagatomi is a changed man. A doctor in Japan, he has built a shrine of remorse in his waiting room. Patients can watch videotapes of his trial in Nanking and a full confession of his crimes. The gentle and hospitable demeanor of the doctor belies the horror of his past, making it almost impossible for one to imagine that he had once been a ruthless murderer.

"Few know that soldiers impaled babies on bayonets and tossed them still alive into pots of boiling water," Nagatomi said. "They gang-raped women from the ages of twelve to eighty and then killed them when they could no longer satisfy sexual requirements. I beheaded people, starved them to death, burned them, and buried them alive, over two hundred in all. It is terrible that I could turn into an animal and do these things. There are really no words to explain what I was doing. I was truly a devil."

### 3

## THE FALL OF NANKING



**N**ANKING. A city long celebrated as one of China's greatest literary, artistic, and political centers, a city that served as the ancient capital of China from the third century to the sixth, and then intermittently after the fourteenth century. It was in Nanking that the canons of Chinese calligraphy and painting were set, that the four-tone system of the Chinese language was established, that some of the most famous Buddhist scriptures were edited and transcribed, and from which the classic "Six Dynasties" essay style (a blending of Chinese poetry and prose) emerged. It was in Nanking in 1842 that the treaty ending the Opium Wars was signed, opening China to foreign trade. And it was in Nanking in 1911 that the Nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen became the first provisional president of his nascent Republic of China. Today it proudly holds his tomb.

Mention the name Nanking to any Chinese, and he or she will draw you a picture of

a city filled with ancient imperial palaces, lavish tombs, museums, and memorials. The picture would include the intricately carved stone statues of warriors and animals built during the Ming dynasty, the famous Drum Tower (Marco Polo saw the original one seven hundred years ago—the modern version was built three centuries later by a military leader who beat a huge drum from the tower to signal his soldiers), and the scenery on the outskirts of Nanking—temples perched on nearby mountains and hills, tea pavilions and lotus blossoms on its lakes, a massive bridge spanning the Yangtze River.

For centuries, water and mountain provided not only beauty for Nanking but military protection. The Yangtze River to the west and the Purple Mountain to the east shielded the city “like a coiling dragon and a crouching tiger,” to borrow an ancient phrase describing Nanking’s natural strength.

But sadly, three times Nanking has been an invaded city.

The first invasion occurred more than a millennium ago, at the end of the sixth century, when barbarian hordes demolished every important building in the city and even plowed up the land inside the walls. The second came more than one thousand years later, between 1853 and 1864, when the Taiping rebels captured the city. They were led by the fanatical leader Hong Xiuquan, who, after failing scholarly examinations that would have guaranteed him a place in the nation’s elite, convinced himself and others that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ. The attempt he then spearheaded to overthrow the Qing dynasty eventually killed some twenty million Chinese over thirteen years. The rebels used Nanking as their capital for more than a decade until they were driven out, at which time they reduced the city to smoldering ruins and even smashed the Porcelain Pagoda, a multicolored tower of glazed tiles considered the most beautiful structure of its kind in China.

For the remainder of the nineteenth century, Nanking slumbered in peace and obscurity. When the Manchu emperors resumed their reign of China from the northern city of Peking, Nanking became nothing more than a cultural relic. It would not regain its importance until the Nationalists overthrew the

Qing and anointed Nanking as China's capital, which it officially became in 1928.

By 1937, the year of the Rape, the old Nanking, the Nanking of the Qing dynasty, was competing with the new Nanking of the Nationalists. Vestiges of the old China remained in the streets of the capital: the restaurant vendors balancing tiny rice bowls and teapots on baskets from poles, the hand weavers hunching over looms of silk in open-air factories, the noodle-shop workers stretching pasta by hand, the tinsmiths jangling their tin wares through the streets, the cobblers mending shoes before the doors of their customers, the candy made before the eyes of eager children clutching copper coins with square holes in the middle, the men with squeaking wheelbarrows piled so high with reeds that one could see neither the wheelbarrow nor the man. Yet the new was everywhere—in the asphalt roads that gradually replaced dirt and cobblestone paths, in the electric and neon lamps that replaced the last of the flickering gaslight, candle, and oil lamps, in the water that flowed from taps instead of being sold on the streets by the casketful. Honking buses and automobiles filled with military officials, bureaucrats, and foreign diplomats wove their way past ricksha pullers, mule carts laden with vegetables, and ambling crowds of pedestrians and animals—dogs, cats, horses, donkeys, even the occasional water buffalo or camel.

But part of the old seemed as if it would never change. Encircling the city was an ancient, immense stone wall built during the Ming dynasty, a wall that one missionary called one of the greatest wonders of the world. Surely, he proclaimed, if one were permitted to drive on top of it, that person would see one of the most spectacular views in China. From atop the wall at the southern tip of the city, one could see beyond crenellated gray battlements, the dust-gray brick of the working-class districts, the red and blue tile roofs of some of the more affluent homes, then, peering northward, some of the taller, modern buildings of the government district: the ministries and embassies built in Western-style architecture.

Gazing toward the northeast, one might detect the glistening white Sun Yat-sen mausoleum against the darker sweep of

Purple Mountain and dots of country villas owned by the wealthiest and most powerful citizens of Nanking. Then, looking to the northwest, one might catch glimpses of the industrial activity on the waterfront: the fingers of smoke from the factories, the inky smudge of the coal port, the steamships and gunboats near the dock, the tracks of the North China railway and the Shanghai-Nanking railway slashing across the city and horizon to intersect at the station in Hsiakwan, a northern suburb. Along the horizon one might see the giant, brawling, khaki-colored waters of the Yangtze River, curving west and north beyond the walls of Nanking.

In the summer of 1937 all these lustrous, cacophonous parts of Nanking lay under a blanket of somnolence. The air, soggy with humidity, had long earned the capital its title as one of "the three furnaces of China." The heat, mingled with the pungent odor of the night soil of nearby fields, drove many of the rich out of the city during the worst of the summer heat to seaside resorts. For those who remained, summer was a time of frequent naps, of lazy swishes of reed or bamboo fans, of houses draped with bamboo matting to shade them from the sun. In the evenings neighbors fled from the ovens of their homes by pulling lawn chairs into the streets to gossip the night away and then to sleep in the open air.

Few could predict that within months war would march by their very doorsteps—leaving their homes in flames and their streets drenched with blood.

On August 15, Chang Siao-sung, an instructor of psychology at Ginling College, had just lain back in bed for a nap when she heard the shriek of a siren. "Are they giving us an air-raid practice?" she thought. "Why didn't I see an announcement in the morning papers?"

When fighting had broken out between Chinese and Japanese forces in Shanghai earlier that month, forcing the Nanking government to ready itself for possible enemy attacks elsewhere as well, Chinese officials not only held practice air-raid drills in the city but ordered residents to camouflage their

houses and create bomb shelters. Across Nanking men painted black the red rooftops and white walls of their houses or dug holes in the ground to hide in. It was as if the city were preparing for a "funeral on a large scale," remembers Chang eerily.

So on August 15, when she heard a second signal, Chang took notice. But her friends in the house convinced her that it was just another practice, and so she again went back to bed, until she heard a dull rumbling sound, like that of a cannon. "Oh, it is thunder," one friend said and went back to reading her novel. Chang returned to bed, ashamed of being overly excited, until she heard the unmistakable sounds of machine-gun fire and airplanes overhead. Nanking was experiencing its first aerial bombardment in history.

For the next few months Nanking would endure dozens of Japanese air raids, forcing residents to hide in basements, trenches, and dugouts in the ground. Japanese pilots bombed the capital indiscriminately, hitting schools, hospitals, power plants, and government buildings and prompting thousands of people both rich and poor to flee the city.

Frank Xing, now a practitioner of Oriental medicine in San Francisco, recalls the hectic, nightmarish conditions under which he and his parents left Nanking during the autumn of 1937. Then a boy of eleven, he packed his precious collection of slingshots and marbles for the journey while his grandmother gave his father, a railway mechanic, bracelets of jade and silver to pawn in the event of future emergency. The train that bore his family to Hankow was so packed that hundreds of refugees unable to get seats sat on top of the compartments, while others also unable to get seats literally strapped themselves underneath the train, their bodies hanging only inches above the tracks. Throughout the journey Xing heard rumors that people had fallen off the train or rolled under the wheels. Xing himself barely survived the trip when Japanese bombers attacked the train, forcing his family to jump out and hide in a cemetery.

My own grandparents nearly separated forever during the evacuations from Nanking. In the autumn of 1937 my grandfather Chang Tien-Chun, a poet and journalist, was working for the Chinese government to instruct officials in Nationalist Party

philosophy. The Japanese bombardment of the capital forced him and his family to hide repeatedly in ditches covered by wooden planks and sandbags. By October he had decided it was unsafe for my grandmother (then a pregnant young woman in her early twenties) and my aunt (a one-year-old infant) to remain in Nanking. Both returned to my grandmother's home village in the countryside, a village near Ihsing, a city on the banks of Tai Hu Lake, between Nanking and Shanghai.

In November, on the anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's death, my grandfather left the city to see his wife and family. Returning to Nanking just a few days later, he found his entire work unit busy packing up in preparation for their evacuation from the city. Told that provisions had been made for the unit to leave by ship from the city of Wuhu, on the banks of the Yangtze River, my grandfather sent word to his family to meet him there immediately.

They almost didn't make it. With aerial bombing, the Japanese had destroyed the railway tracks between my grandmother's village and the city of Wuhu; the only route was by sampan through the intricate network of tiny waterways that laced the entire region.

For four long days my grandfather waited anxiously at the docks scanning boatload after boatload of war refugees. By the fourth day his family still had not arrived, leaving him with a choice that no man should ever be forced to make: board the next and final boat out of Wuhu, in the belief that his wife and daughter were not on their way to Nanking, or stay, in case they were, knowing full well that shortly thereafter the city would be overrun.

In despair, he screamed his beloved's name—"Yi-Pei!"—to the heavens. Then, like an echo from far away, he heard a reply. It came from one last sampan approaching the docks in the distance, a tiny sampan bearing his wife, his daughter, and several of my grandmother's relatives. My mother always told me that their reunion was a miracle.

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Unlike my grandparents, many residents of Nanking remained in the city through much of November, some choosing to take a wait-and-see attitude, others staying because they were too old or too poor to do anything else. For them November brought consistently bad news—the battle had not gone well in Shanghai. Long files of Chinese soldiers, many of them mere boys, some no older than twelve, were returning from the battlefield, exhausted, wounded, and demoralized, marching in grim silence or riding in huge trucks draped with the banners of the Red Cross. Those who could took solace from the fact that new units of heavily armed troops could be seen marching through the streets to the waterfront, where they boarded junks towed by tugs on their way to the battlefield. Obviously, the fight was not over. Through rain and howling wind, small modern Chinese tanks rumbled from the capital toward Shanghai, next to lines of pack mules weighed down with cotton uniforms, blankets, rifles, and machine guns.

Later that month the dreaded news finally reached Nanking. Shanghai—"the New York City of China"—had fallen. More than two hundred thousand Japanese troops now stood between the ocean and the capital while some seven hundred thousand Chinese troops fell back in retreat. They brought the news no one wanted to hear. With Shanghai in ruins, the Japanese were now headed for Nanking.

The loss of Shanghai came as a blow to Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nationalists. Faced with the loss of China's largest metropolis, Chiang tried to resolve a difficult dilemma: whether to defend Nanking against the Japanese or move the entire capital to safer ground. In the end the Generalissimo decided to do both. But rather than stay and defend Nanking himself, he shifted the burden to someone else—a subordinate called Tang Sheng-chih.

The relationship between Chiang and Tang Sheng-chih was strange and highly complex. Neither really trusted the other—indeed, at different points in their lives the two men had been partners as well as the deadliest of rivals. During the Northern

Expedition, for example, as the Nationalists tried to unite the country, Tang helped Chiang wage battle against feudal warlords. But Tang had never shown Chiang any particular loyalty, and power struggles between the two men resulted twice in Tang's exile from China—once to Hong Kong and then again to Japan. In 1931, however, when the crisis erupted between the Chinese and Japanese over Manchuria, Chiang summoned Tang back into service in an effort to strengthen Chinese defenses. Tang rose swiftly through the Chinese military hierarchy, and by 1937 he had become Chiang's director of military training.

In November 1937, during several high-level military conferences on the issue of defending or abandoning Nanking, Tang, virtually alone among Chiang's advisers, spoke up in support of providing a strong defense. By defending Nanking, he argued, Chinese troops could simultaneously slow the advance of the Japanese army and give the rest of the Chinese military a chance to rest and reorganize.

But when Chiang asked who would stay and lead the defense, Tang and the other officials were quiet. Singling Tang out, Chiang presented him with an ultimatum: "Either I stay or you stay." In the presence of his peers, Tang undoubtedly felt he had no choice. "How can we let the Generalissimo stay?" Tang asked. He promised that he would remain in Nanking and fight to the death.

The decision to entrust Tang with the defense of Nanking made big news. On November 27, Tang gave a press conference to boost morale. Before reporters he delivered a rousing speech—vowing to live or die with Nanking. His speech was so passionate that when it ended, reporters gave him a big round of applause.

But some reporters noted that Tang also appeared to be extremely agitated. In fact, he had just recovered from a major illness, and in the words of one foreign correspondent, he seemed "dazed if not doped." He sweated so profusely that someone handed him a hot towel to dry his brow.

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Perhaps Chiang knew that his adviser was in no shape to do battle with the seasoned Japanese military and had appointed him merely to make it appear as if the Chinese were really going to put up a strong defense. Or perhaps caution told Chiang to be ready with a second plan just in case. What we do know is that during the latter half of November the second plan went into effect. First Chiang ordered most government officials to move to three cities west of Nanking—Changsha, Hankow, and Chungking—stoking rumors among the few officials left behind that they had been abandoned to whatever fate the Japanese planned for them. Within days official-looking cars packed with luggage clogged the streets; then, just as quickly, such cars disappeared altogether. Buses and rickshas also left with the departing government officials, leaving the city with no public municipal transportation. Indeed, soon almost every truck was gone, even those trucks that were used primarily to transport rice from the countryside to Nanking. And then, in mid-November, fifty thousand Chinese troops arrived to take the place of departed government officials. Arriving from up-river ports, they first unloaded boxes and boxes of weapons on the waterfront and then started to occupy empty government buildings of their choosing. By December an estimated ninety thousand Chinese troops populated the Nanking area.

The troops transformed the face of Nanking. Chinese soldiers dug trenches in the streets, laid down underground telephone wire, and strung barbed wire over city intersections—intersections that began to resemble battlefields. The troops also fortified the city wall, installing machine-gun redoubts along the ancient battlements. They shut all gates except three, keeping narrow passageways open only for military transport. Gates were barricaded with sandbags twenty feet deep and reinforced with wood and angle iron. At least one of them was walled up entirely with concrete.

In early December the military also resolved to clear by fire a mile-wide battle zone around the entire circumference of the city walls, regardless of the cost and suffering involved. The cost was incalculable. Along the outskirts of the city, the inferno consumed petrol and ammunition, barracks, agricultural

research experimental laboratories, a police training school, and mansions in Mausoleum Park. In the countryside soldiers torched straw huts, farmhouses with thatched roofs, trees, bamboo groves, and underbrush. Not even major Nanking suburbs were spared. Troops herded residents from Hsiakwan and districts around the South Gate into the city walls before incinerating their neighborhoods. People whose houses had been targeted for destruction were told to move out within hours or risk being arrested as spies. The military justified the burning as a strategic move to eliminate any structure of potential use to the invader. But one foreign correspondent pointed out that charred walls could serve the Japanese almost as well as actual buildings for shelter against ammunition. He speculated that the fire was really "an outlet for rage and frustration" for the Chinese—a desire to leave the Japanese with little more than scorched earth.

And so a city prepared for invasion. Anyone and anything with the strength, the judgment, the money, or the opportunity to leave began to get out. Whole museums were packed and carted away. On December 2, hundreds of boxes of Palace Museum treasures—practically the whole of China's cultural heritage—were loaded onto a boat for safe storage outside the city. Six days later, on December 8, Chiang Kai-shek, his wife, and his adviser fled the city by plane. There was no longer any doubt. The Japanese siege of Nanking was about to begin.

For decades one of the mysteries of the Rape of Nanking was how, with so many soldiers in place, the city of Nanking fell in just four days, on the evening of December 12, 1937. The troops, after all, possessed enough ammunition to last through at least five months of siege. As a result, many survivors, journalists, and historians attributed the collapse to a loss of nerve among the Chinese soldiers. They also branded Tang a villain who abandoned his troops when they most needed him.

Later history based on newer documents suggests a somewhat different picture. During the battle of Shanghai, the Japanese air force of almost three thousand planes dwarfed

the tiny Chinese air force of three hundred. In other ways the Chinese were no match aerially for the Japanese. During the battle of Shanghai, Italian-trained Chinese pilots wreaked havoc on the city, dropping bombs near Western ships and even on crowded streets and buildings within the international settlement.

But even a bad air force is better than no air force. And that was the situation presented to Tang. On December 8, the day Chiang and his advisers left the city, so too did the entire Chinese air corps. Tang fought the next four days without the benefit of any strategic aerial data on Japanese movements, rendering even the expensive Chinese fort guns on the hills and mountains around Nanking much less effective.

Second, the government officials who moved to Chungking took with them most of the sophisticated communications equipment; thus, one part of the army could not talk to another.

Third, the troops did not come from the same regions and literally had trouble speaking to each other. One paramedic in Nanking recalled that the Chinese military doctors spoke Cantonese while the Chinese soldiers spoke Mandarin, a situation that created endless confusion in the hospitals.

Fourth, many of the "soldiers" in this army became soldiers overnight, having been kidnapped or drafted against their will into the army from the countryside. A substantial number had never held a gun in their hands before Nanking. Because bullets were scarce, few were wasted teaching these recruits how to shoot. Of those soldiers who had previous experience, many had just come back from Shanghai. Tired, hungry, and sick, most were much too exhausted to finish the necessary preparation work of building barricades and digging trenches in the city.

Worst of all, Chinese soldiers felt little sense of cohesiveness or purpose. In a battle report about conditions in Nanking, a Chinese military officer noted that whenever troops occupied an area, they tended to idle about rather than take the initiative to help other troops engaged in nearby battles with the Japanese. The commanding officers, apparently, were no better.

They did not trust each other, the report observed, and for this reason the Japanese were able to move from one area to another, defeating Chinese armies one by one.

On December 9, Japanese airplanes began dropping leaflets near Nanking written by Matsui Iwane, one of the three Japanese generals. The best way to "protect innocent civilians and cultural relics in the city," the message read, was to capitulate. The message promised that the Japanese would be "harsh and relentless to those who resist" but "kind and generous to non-combatants and to Chinese troops who entertain no enmity to Japan." It demanded that the city surrender within twenty-four hours, by noon the next day, "otherwise all the horrors of war will be let loose."

Publicly Tang expressed outrage at the terms of the ultimatum. Throwing the leaflet to the ground, he dictated two orders that were distributed among the troops. The first order forbade the army to retreat. "Our army must fight to defend every inch of the front line," the order read. "If anyone does not follow this order and retreats, he will be punished severely." The second order prohibited any military group from using boats privately to cross the river. If any military units possessed boats, they were required to turn them over to the transportation department. Tang designated the 78th Army as the unit responsible for directing and handling transportation matters and warned that any military personnel found using boats for private purposes would be punished.

Privately, however, Tang negotiated for a truce. Despite his original promise to fight to the last man, he seemed eager to do anything to avoid a showdown in the city. Supporting him in this stance were the few Americans and Europeans still in the city. These selfless individuals, about whom we will learn more later, had decided to remain in Nanking to do what they could to help and had created the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. One of their first steps was to cordon off an area of the city and declare it the Nanking Safety Zone, or the International Safety Zone, with the understanding that

anyone within the zone of two and a half square miles, Chinese or non-Chinese, was off-limits to the Japanese. Now, in a final effort to save lives, they offered to try to arrange a truce with the Japanese. Their plan was to suggest a three-day cease-fire, during which the Japanese could keep their present positions and march into Nanking peacefully while the Chinese troops withdrew from the city. Tang agreed to the proposed truce and asked the committee to send a message from him to Chiang Kai-shek through the U.S. embassy. The plan was transmitted by radio on the USS *Panay* gunboat to the Generalissimo. Chiang promptly rejected it.

On December 10, the Japanese waited for the city to surrender. At midday two Japanese staff officers stood outside the Mountain Gate in the eastern wall to see whether the Chinese government would send out a delegation with the flag of truce. When none arrived, the Japanese high command ordered a furious bombardment of the city.

The next few days saw intense fighting between the Chinese and Japanese troops around Nanking. The Japanese dropped bombs on the city and pounded the walls with heavy artillery fire. Tang would later reveal the gravity of the situation near certain landmarks and gates of the city in a long, rambling, and desperate telegram to Chiang Kai-shek:

From the 9th to the 11th of December the Japanese forced their way through Guanguamen three times, first the military training corps tried to resist them, then the 156th division bitterly fought back, killing many of the enemy and holding the gate. Starting noon on the 11th, bad news came frequently from the Yuhuatai area, Andemen, Fongtaimen fell to the enemy, ordered immediately the 88th division to shrink the front-line, coordinate with the 74th army, 71st army, rapidly transferred 154th division to help.

But worse news awaited Tang, and this time the bad news would come not from the enemy's successes but from Chiang himself. At noon on December 11, General Gu Zhutong placed a telephone call to Tang's office. Orders had come directly from Chiang, Gu informed Tang, for a massive retreat of Tang's

forces. Tang himself was to hurry to Pukow, the site of a ferry and railway terminal that lay across the river from Nanking, where another general would wait to pick him up and bring him to safety.

Tang expressed shock. Aside from the fact that he was being asked to abandon his troops, an unattractive alternative for any leader, he had another very real problem—his troops were at that moment engaged in furious fighting. He informed Gu that the Japanese had already penetrated the troops' front lines; an orderly retreat was not even a possibility. It would readily turn into a rout.

"I can't worry about that," Gu Zhutong said. "Anyhow, you have to retreat by tonight."

When Tang again detailed the likely consequences of a sudden and hasty retreat, Gu reminded him that he, Tang, had been personally ordered by Chiang to "cross the river tonight." Leave a subordinate behind to handle the situation if you have to, Gu told Tang, but "you must cross the river tonight," he repeated.

Impossible, Tang said. The earliest he could cross the Yangtze was the next night. Gu warned him to leave town as soon as possible, for the situation with the enemy had grown urgent.

That afternoon Tang received a telegram from Chiang confirming the order: "Commander-in-Chief Tang, if you cannot maintain the situation you should take the opportunity to retreat in order to preserve and reorganize [the army] for future counterattack. —Kai. 11th." Later that day the distressed Tang received a second telegram from Chiang, again urging retreat.

Unable to hold the line and under pressure, Tang complied. It was a decision that resulted in one of the worst disasters of Chinese military history.

At 3:00 A.M. on December 12, Tang held a predawn meeting at his home. As his vice commanders and top staff gathered before him, Tang told them sadly that the front had fallen, that there was no way for them to defend the gates of the city, and



that Chiang Kai-shek had ordered the troops to retreat. He told his subordinates to prepare for the retreat by printing copies of the order and other related documents. That afternoon, at 1:00 P.M., the orders were distributed among the Chinese military.

But then electrifying reports reached Tang. Tang hoped to remove his troops via the Yangtze River. Now he learned that the Japanese navy was minesweeping the river to the east of the island of Baguazhou and steaming its way to Nanking. Its arrival would block that escape route, the last from the city. With the situation dire, Tang again approached the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone on 5 Ninghai Road, asking Eduard Sperling, a German businessman, for help in negotiating a truce with the Japanese. Sperling agreed to take a flag and message to the Japanese but later reported to Tang that General Matsui had refused his offer.

That afternoon, just minutes before his commanders gathered for a second meeting, Tang watched from the window of his house as an entire city took flight, the streets jammed with cars, horses, and refugees—the young and the old, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor. Anyone with half a brain was determined to get out while he still could. At 5:00 P.M. the meeting began. It lasted only ten minutes. Many of the top military officials did not attend because communication between the field commanders and central command had all but collapsed. Others never received notification of the meeting because they had assessed the situation for themselves and run away.

The Japanese, Tang told those gathered in his home, had already broken through the gates of the city and penetrated the wall in three places. "Do you still have any confidence to hold the defense line?" he asked the group. Although he waited several minutes for a response, the room remained silent.

After this pause, Tang calmly discussed strategies for retreat. The evacuation would start within minutes—at 6:00 P.M.—and last until 6:00 A.M. the next day. One portion of the army—the 36th Division and the military police—would cross the river from Hsiakwan and gather at a designated village on the other side. The rest of the army, he announced, would have to force its way out of the Japanese encirclement, with the survivors

congregating at the southern region of the Anhwei province. Weapons, ammunition, and communications equipment left behind were to be destroyed, and all roads and bridges in the path of the retreating army burned.

Later in the same meeting, Tang modified his order. He informed his men that if the 87th Division, 88th Division, 74th Army, and military training corps could not break through the Japanese encirclement, then they too should try to cross the river. Tang now gave five divisions the authority to cross the Yangtze River—doubling the original number of men involved in the operation. That evening Tang would himself journey to the docks. It would be a journey he remembered for the rest of his life.

Not surprisingly, the order to retreat threw the Chinese military into an uproar. Some officers ran about the city haphazardly informing anyone they came into contact with to pull out. These soldiers took off. Other officers told no one, not even their own troops. Instead, they saved their own hides. Their soldiers continued to fight the Japanese; thinking they were witnessing a mass desertion when they saw other troops fleeing, they machine-gunned hundreds of their fleeing comrades in an effort to stop them. In the haste and confusion to leave the city, at least one Chinese tank rolled over countless Chinese soldiers in its path, stopping only when blown up by a hand grenade.

Even in the larger, tragic scheme of things, the retreat had its comic moments. As soldiers grew desperate to blend into the populace and thereby elude capture, they broke into shops to steal civilian clothes and undressed in the open. The streets soon filled not only with half-naked soldiers but with half-naked police officers, who had discarded their uniforms to avoid being mistaken as soldiers. One man roamed about wearing nothing but his underwear and a top hat, probably stolen from the home of a wealthy government official. In the early stages of the retreat, when a semblance of order remained, entire sections of the Chinese army were shedding

their uniforms, changing into civilian clothes, and marching in formation, simultaneously. But when the retreat turned into a rout, the scramble for clothes grew urgent. Soldiers were actually seen throwing themselves on pedestrians and ripping clothes off their backs.

There was only one way to get out of the city safely without encountering the Japanese, and that was through the northern harbor to the Yangtze River, where a fleet of junks were waiting for those who could get there first. In order to reach the harbor, soldiers had to first move up the main artery of Chungshan Road, and then pass through the northwest gate of the city, called the Ichang, or Water Gate, before they could enter the northern port suburb of Hsiakwan.

But before the gate lay a scene of almost unbelievable congestion. One problem was that thousands of soldiers, many in trucks, cars, and horse-drawn wagons, were trying to squeeze themselves through the narrow seventy-foot tunnel. The trickle of men had turned into a river by 5:00 P.M., and a flood by late evening, as everyone tried to funnel through the tiny opening of the gate. Another problem was that the retreating soldiers had discarded countless armaments and supplies to lighten their load for the journey across the river, and the resulting heaps of hand grenades, buses, machine guns, coats, shoes, and helmets near the gate of the city blocked traffic. A barricade that had been built near the gate also blocked half the road. The area was ripe for disaster.

Tang witnessed much of this chaos from the window of his chauffeured black car on his way to the docks. As the car maneuvered through tangles of people, he heard pedestrians curse him. How can you ride in a car at a time like this? they yelled, unaware that the passenger in the car was Tang Sheng-chih. Tang pretended not to hear and shut his eyes as the car inched turtlelike to its final destination. He was supposed to arrive at the docks by 6:00 P.M., but it was 8:00 P.M. before he finally got there.

Absolute bedlam greeted Tang at the riverfront. Military officers were arguing with each other over which pieces of equipment to destroy and which to ferry across the Yangtze River,

while soldiers tried to balance tanks on rows of boats bound together. Much of it capsized and sank anyway.

As the night progressed, the soldiers focused on getting themselves across and abandoned the tanks and equipment. The scene grew violent as boats grew scarce, and in the end some ten thousand men would fight over two or three vessels, struggling to cram themselves aboard or to scare off others by firing shots in the air. Terrified crews tried to ward off the surging mob by swinging axes down on the fingers of soldiers who clung to the sides of their junks and sampans.

Innumerable men died trying to cross the river that night. Many never even made it past the gate. That evening a fire broke out on Chungshan Road, and the flames swept through heaps of ammunition, engulfing houses and vehicles. Horses ensnarled in traffic panicked and reared, heightening the confusion of the mob. The terror-mad soldiers surged forward, their momentum pushing hundreds of men into the flames and hundreds more into the tunnel, where they were trampled underfoot. With the gate blocked and an inferno raging nearby, the soldiers who could break free from the mob made a wild rush to climb over the walls. Hundreds tore their clothing into strips and knotted them with belts and puttees to make rope ladders. One after another, they scaled the battlements and tossed down rifles and machine guns from the parapets. Many fell and plummeted to their deaths.

When the last boats disappeared, soldiers dove into the waters on makeshift flotation devices, hugging or sitting on wooden railroad tracks, logs, boards, buckets, bathtubs, or doors stolen from nearby houses. When the last pieces of wood disappeared, many attempted to swim across, meeting almost certain death.

Tang and two vice commanders boarded a tiny coal-driven launch and waited until 9:00 P.M. for two more military staff members who never arrived. From the launch Tang would have heard the noise and screams of people fighting with each other, mingled with the louder punctuated sounds of Japanese cannon fire. Then there was the sight, the sight of Nanking on fire. The conflagration lit the dark sky bright.

One can only imagine the thoughts of the humiliated Tang as his launch moved across the river. His last glimpse of Nanking was of a city in flames, its people frantically trying to save themselves, his own troops hanging onto driftwood to stay afloat in the dark cold waters of the Yangtze. He would later tell friends that while he had fought in hundreds of battles over twenty years, he had never experienced a day as dark as that one.

## 4

# SIX WEEKS OF HORROR



**B**Y THE TIME the Japanese passed through the gates of the city, all those residents who possessed any degree of money, power, or foresight had already left for parts unknown. Approximately half the original population departed: before the war, the native population of the city exceeded 1 million people, and by December it had fallen to about half a million. However, the city was swollen with tens of thousands of migrants from the countryside who had left their homes for what they believed would be safety within the city walls. Those who remained after the soldiers departed tended to be the most defenseless: children, the elderly, and all those either too poor or physically weak to secure passage out of the city.

Without protection, without personal resources, without a plan, all these people had was hope that the Japanese would treat them well. Many likely talked themselves into the belief that once the fighting stopped the

Japanese would of course treat them civilly. Some may have even convinced themselves that the Japanese would be better rulers—after all, their own government had clearly abandoned them in their hour of need. Weary of fire, weary of bombardment, and weary of siege, scattered groups of Chinese actually rushed out to welcome the Japanese invaders as they thundered into the city with their tanks, artillery, and trucks. Some people hung Japanese flags from their windows while others even cheered the Japanese columns as they marched through the south and west gates of the city.

But the welcome was short-lived. Eyewitnesses later claimed that the Japanese soldiers, who roamed the city in groups of six to twelve men, fired at anyone in sight as soon as they entered the capital. Old men were found face down on the pavement, apparently shot in the back on whim; civilian Chinese corpses lay sprawled on almost every block—many who had done nothing more provocative than run away as the Japanese approached.

In the war crimes transcripts and Chinese government documentation, story after story of what happened next begins to sound, even in all its horrific dimensions, almost monotonous. With few variations, the story goes something like this:

The Japanese would take any men they found as prisoners, neglect to give them water or food for days, but promise them food and work. After days of such treatment, the Japanese would bind the wrists of their victims securely with wire or rope and herd them out to some isolated area. The men, too tired or dehydrated to rebel, went out eagerly, thinking they would be fed. By the time they saw the machine guns, or the bloodied swords and bayonets wielded by waiting soldiers, or the massive graves, heaped and reeking with the bodies of the men who had preceded them, it was already too late to escape.

The Japanese would later justify their actions by saying that they had to execute POWs to save their own limited food supply and prevent revolts. But nothing can excuse what the Japanese did to hundreds of thousands of helpless Chinese civilians in Nanking. They had no weapons and were in no position to mutiny.

Not all Chinese, of course, submitted easily to extermination in Nanking. The Rape of Nanking is a story not only of mass victimization but of individual strength and courage. There were men who clawed their way out of shallow graves, or clung to reeds for hours in the icy Yangtze River, or lay buried for days under the corpses of friends before dragging their bullet-ridden bodies to the hospital, sustained only by a tenacious will to survive. There were women who hid in holes or in ditches for weeks, or ran through burning houses to rescue their babies.

Many of these survivors later gave their stories to reporters and historians or testified at the war crimes trials held in Nanking and Tokyo after the defeat of Japan. When interviewing several of them during the summer of 1995, I learned that many of the Chinese victims of the Japanese were apparently murdered for no other reason than pleasure. Such was the observation of Tang Shunsan, now in his eighties, a Nanking resident who had miraculously survived a Japanese killing contest back in 1937.

### THE KILLING CONTESTS

Unlike thousands of hapless civilians who were bombed out of their homes and stranded on the streets of Nanking, Tang had actually secured a haven during the massacre. Then a twenty-five-year-old shoemaker's apprentice, Tang hid in the home of two fellow apprentices on Xiaomenkou, a tiny street in the northern part of the city. His friends (known to Tang as "Big Monk" and "Little Monk") had camouflaged the doorway of their house by removing the door and filling the open space with bricks so that it resembled, from the outside, a smooth, unbroken wall. For hours they sat on the dirt floor of the house, listening to the screams and gunshots outside.

Tang's problem began when he experienced a sudden urge to see a Japanese soldier with his own eyes. All his life he had heard that the Japanese looked like the Chinese, but never having been to Japan, he had been unable to verify this. Here was



a golden opportunity to see for himself. Tang tried to suppress his curiosity but finally succumbed to it. He asked his friends to remove the bricks from the doorway to let him out.

Not surprisingly, his friends pleaded with Tang not to go, warning him that the Japanese would kill him if they caught him wandering around outdoors. But Tang was not so easily dissuaded. Big Monk and Little Monk argued with him at length but finally gave up trying to change his mind. Risking their own safety, they removed the bricks from the door and let Tang out.

As soon as Tang stepped outside, he began to regret it. A scene of almost surreal horror gripped him. He saw the bodies of men and women—even the bodies of small children and the elderly—crumpled before him in the streets. Most had been stabbed or bayoneted to death. "Blood was splattered everywhere," Tang recalled of that horrible afternoon, "as if the heavens had been raining blood."

Then Tang saw another Chinese person in the street and, behind him, a group of eight or nine Japanese approaching in the distance. Instinctively, Tang and the stranger jumped into a nearby rubbish bin, heaping straw and paper over their heads. They shivered from cold and fear, causing the sides of the bin to shiver with them.

Suddenly the straw was knocked away. A Japanese soldier hovered overhead, glaring at them, and before Tang quite knew what was happening the soldier had decapitated the person next to him with his sword. Blood gushed from the victim's neck as the soldier reached down and seized the head as a trophy. "I was too frightened to even move or think," Tang remembered. "I thought of my family and knew that if I died here, they would never know what happened to me."

Then a Chinese voice ordered Tang out. "*Gun chu lai!* (Roll out!)," exclaimed a Chinese man whom Tang suspected was a traitor for the Japanese. "*Gun chu lai, or I'll kill you!*"

Tang crawled out of the trash bin. Seeing a ditch by the road, he wondered whether he should fling himself into it and attempt an escape but found that he was too frightened even to move his legs. Then he saw a group of Japanese soldiers herd-

ing hundreds of Chinese people down the street. Tang was ordered to join them. As he marched next to the other prisoners, he saw corpses sprawled on both sides of the streets, something that made him feel so wretched he almost welcomed death.

Before long Tang found himself standing near a pond and a freshly dug, rectangular pit filled with some sixty Chinese corpses. "As soon as I saw the newly dug pit, I thought they might either bury us alive or kill us on the spot. I was too frightened to move so I stood there motionless. It suddenly occurred to me to jump into the pit but then I saw two Japanese military wolf dogs eating the corpses."

The Japanese ordered Tang and the other prisoners to line up in rows on each side of the mass grave. He stood in one closest to the edge. Nine Japanese soldiers waited nearby, soldiers who presented an imposing sight to Tang with their yellow uniforms, star-studded caps, and shiny bayonets and rifles. At such proximity, Tang could see that Japanese men really *did* resemble Chinese men, although at this point he was too frightened to care.

Then, to Tang's horror, a competition began among the soldiers—a competition to determine who could kill the fastest. As one soldier stood sentinel with a machine gun, ready to mow down anyone who tried to bolt, the eight other soldiers split up into pairs to form four separate teams. In each team, one soldier beheaded prisoners with a sword while the other picked up heads and tossed them aside in a pile. The prisoners stood frozen in silence and terror as their countrymen dropped, one by one. "Kill and count! Kill and count!" Tang said, remembering the speed of the slaughter. The Japanese were laughing; one even took photographs. "There was no sign of remorse at all."

A deep sorrow filled Tang. "There was no place to run. I was prepared to die." It saddened him to think that his family and loved ones would never find out what happened to him.

Lost in such thoughts, Tang snapped back to reality when the commotion started. Two rows up from him a pregnant woman began to fight for her life, clawing desperately at a

soldier who tried to drag her away from the group to rape her. Nobody helped her, and in the end the soldier killed her, ripping open her belly with his bayonet and jerking out not only her intestines but a squirming fetus. That, Tang believes, should have been the moment for them all to rebel, to do *something*, to fight back and try to kill the soldiers even if they all died in the process. But even though the Chinese prisoners greatly outnumbered their Japanese tormentors and might have been able to overwhelm them, no one moved. Everyone remained eerily docile. Sad to say, of all the people around the pit, Tang remembers only the pregnant woman showing the slightest bit of courage.

Soon a sword-wielding Japanese soldier worked his way closer to Tang, until he was only one row up from him. Then Tang had a stroke of luck, which was nothing short of a miracle. When the soldier decapitated the man directly in front of Tang, the victim's body fell against Tang's shoulder. In keeping with the corpse's momentum, Tang also toppled backwards and dropped, together with the body, into the pit. No one noticed.

Tang ducked his head under the corpse's clothing. His ploy would have never worked had the Japanese stuck with their original game of decapitation. In the beginning the soldiers used the heads of their victims to keep score. But later, to save time, they killed prisoners not by lopping off heads but by slashing throats. That is what saved Tang—the fact that dozens of bodies were piling up in the pit with their heads intact.

The killing spree lasted for about an hour. While Tang lay still, feigning death, the Japanese pushed the rest of the bodies on top of him. Then, as Tang recalls, most of the soldiers left the scene except for one who thrust his bayonet into the mass grave repeatedly to make sure everyone was dead. Tang suffered five bayonet wounds without a scream, and then fainted.

Later that afternoon, at about 5:00 P.M., Tang's fellow apprentices Big Monk and Small Monk came to the pit, hoping to retrieve his corpse. Through a crack in the brick wall of their house, they had seen the Japanese herd Tang and the others away and assumed that he was now dead with all the others.

But when they found Tang moving under the heap of bodies, they pulled him out immediately and ushered him back to the house.

Out of the hundreds of people killed that day during the competition, Tang was the only survivor.

## TORTURE

The torture that the Japanese inflicted upon the native population at Nanking almost surpasses the limits of human comprehension. Here are only a few examples:

—*Live burials*: The Japanese directed burial operations with the precision and efficiency of an assembly line. Soldiers would force one group of Chinese captives to dig a grave, a second group to bury the first, and then a third group to bury the second and so on. Some victims were partially buried to their chests or necks so that they would endure further agony, such as being hacked to pieces by swords or run over by horses and tanks.

—*Mutilation*: The Japanese not only disemboweled, decapitated, and dismembered victims but performed more excruciating varieties of torture. Throughout the city they nailed prisoners to wooden boards and ran over them with tanks, crucified them to trees and electrical posts, carved long strips of flesh from them, and used them for bayonet practice. At least one hundred men reportedly had their eyes gouged out and their noses and ears hacked off before being set on fire. Another group of two hundred Chinese soldiers and civilians were stripped naked, tied to columns and doors of a school, and then stabbed by *zhuizi*—special needles with handles on them—in hundreds of points along their bodies, including their mouths, throats, and eyes.

—*Death by fire*: The Japanese subjected large crowds of victims to mass incineration. In Hsiakwan a Japanese soldier bound Chinese captives together, ten at a time, and pushed them into a pit, where they were sprayed with gasoline and ignited. On Taiping Road, the Japanese ordered a large number

of shop clerks to extinguish a fire, then bound them together with rope and threw them into the blaze. Japanese soldiers even devised games with fire. One method of entertainment was to drive mobs of Chinese to the top stories or roofs of buildings, tear down the stairs, and set the bottom floors on fire. Many such victims committed suicide by jumping out windows or off rooftops. Another form of amusement involved dousing victims with fuel, shooting them, and watching them explode into flame. In one infamous incident, Japanese soldiers forced hundreds of men, women, and children into a square, soaked them with gasoline, and then fired on them with machine guns.

—*Death by ice*: Thousands of victims were intentionally frozen to death during the Rape of Nanking. For instance, Japanese soldiers forced hundreds of Chinese prisoners to march to the edge of a frozen pond, where they were ordered to strip naked, break the ice, and plunge into the water to go “fishing.” Their bodies hardened into floating targets that were immediately riddled with Japanese bullets. In another incident, the Japanese tied up a group of refugees, flung them into a shallow pond, and bombarded them with hand grenades, causing “an explosive shower of blood and flesh.”

—*Death by dogs*: One diabolical means of torture was to bury victims to their waist and watch them get ripped apart by German shepherds. Witnesses saw Japanese soldiers strip a victim naked and direct German shepherds to bite the sensitive areas of his body. The dogs not only ripped open his belly but jerked out his intestines along the ground for a distance.

The incidents mentioned above are only a fraction of the methods that the Japanese used to torment their victims. The Japanese saturated victims in acid, impaled babies with bayonets, hung people by their tongues. One Japanese reporter who later investigated the Rape of Nanking learned that at least one Japanese soldier tore the heart and liver out of a Chinese victim to eat them. Even genitals, apparently, were consumed: a Chinese soldier who escaped from Japanese custody saw several dead people in the streets with their penises cut off. He was later told that the penises were sold to Japa-

nese customers who believed that eating them would increase virility.

## THE RAPES

If the scale and nature of the executions in Nanking are difficult for us to comprehend, so are the scale and nature of the rapes.

Certainly it was one of the greatest mass rapes in world history. Susan Brownmiller, author of the landmark book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, believes that the Rape of Nanking was probably the single worst instance of wartime rape inflicted on a civilian population with the sole exception of the treatment of Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers in 1971. (An estimated 200,000–400,000 women were raped in Bangladesh during a nine-month reign of terror following a failed rebellion.) Brownmiller suspects that the Rape of Nanking surpasses in scale even the raping of women in the former Yugoslavia, though it is difficult for her to say for certain because of the unreliability of Bosnian rape statistics.

It is impossible to determine the exact number of women raped in Nanking. Estimates range from as low as twenty thousand to as high as eighty thousand. But what the Japanese did to the women of Nanking cannot be computed in a tally sheet of statistics. We will never know the full psychic toll, because many of the women who survived the ordeal found themselves pregnant, and the subject of Chinese women impregnated by Japanese rapists in Nanking is so sensitive that it has never been completely studied. To my knowledge and to the knowledge of the Chinese historians and officials at the memorial hall erected in memory of the Nanking massacre, not a single Chinese woman has to this day come forward to admit that her child was the result of rape. Many such children were secretly killed; according to an American sociologist in the city at the time of the massacre, numerous half-Japanese children were choked or drowned at birth. One can only guess at the guilt, shame, and self-loathing that Chinese women endured when

they faced the choice of raising a child they could not love or committing infanticide. No doubt many women could not make that choice. Between 1937 and 1938 a German diplomat reported that "uncounted" Chinese women were taking their own lives by flinging themselves into the Yangtze River.

We do know, however, that it was very easy to be a rape victim in Nanking. The Japanese raped Nanking women from all classes: farm wives, students, teachers, white-collar and blue-collar workers, wives of YMCA employees, university professors, even Buddhist nuns, some of whom were gang-raped to death. And they were systematic in their recruitment of women. In Nanking Japanese soldiers searched for them constantly as they looted homes and dragged men off for execution. Some actually conducted door-to-door searches, demanding money and *hua gu niang*—young girls.

This posed a terrible dilemma for the city's young women, who were not sure whether to remain at home or to seek refuge in the International Safety Zone—the neutral territory guarded by Americans and Europeans. If they stayed in their houses, they ran the risk of being raped in front of their families. But if they left home in search of the Safety Zone, they ran the risk of being captured by the Japanese in the streets. Traps lay everywhere for the Nanking women. For instance, the Japanese army fabricated stories about markets where women could exchange bags of rice and flour for chickens and ducks. But when women arrived on the scene prepared to trade, they found platoons of soldiers waiting for them. Some soldiers employed Chinese traitors to seek out prospective candidates for rape. Even in the Safety Zone, the Japanese staged incidents to lure foreigners away from the refugee camps, leaving women vulnerable to kidnapping raids.

Chinese women were raped in all locations and at all hours. An estimated one-third of all rapes occurred during the day. Survivors even remember soldiers prying open the legs of victims to rape them in broad daylight, in the middle of the street, and in front of crowds of witnesses. No place was too sacred for rape. The Japanese attacked women in nunneries, churches, and Bible training schools. Seventeen soldiers raped

one woman in succession in a seminary compound. "Every day, twenty-four hours a day," the *Dagong Daily* newspaper testified of the great Rape of Nanking, "there was not one hour when an innocent woman was not being dragged off somewhere by a Japanese soldier."

Old age was no concern to the Japanese. Matrons, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers endured repeated sexual assaults. A Japanese soldier who raped a woman of sixty was ordered to "clean the penis by her mouth." When a woman of sixty-two protested to soldiers that she was too old for sex, they "rammed a stick up her instead." Many women in their eighties were raped to death, and at least one woman in that age group was shot and killed because she refused a Japanese soldier's advances.

If the Japanese treatment of old women was terrible, their treatment of young children was unthinkable. Little girls were raped so brutally that some could not walk for weeks afterwards. Many required surgery; others died. Chinese witnesses saw Japanese rape girls under ten years of age in the streets and then slash them in half by sword. In some cases, the Japanese sliced open the vaginas of preteen girls in order to ravish them more effectively.

Even advanced stages of pregnancy did not render women immune to assault. The Japanese violated many who were about to go into labor, were in labor, or who had given birth only a few days earlier. One victim who was nine months pregnant when raped suffered not only stillbirth but a complete mental collapse. At least one pregnant woman was kicked to death. Still more gruesome was the treatment allotted to some of the unborn children of these women. After gang rape, Japanese soldiers sometimes slashed open the bellies of pregnant women and ripped out the fetuses for amusement.

The rape of women frequently accompanied the slaughter of entire families.

One of the most notorious stories of such a slaughter was recorded in detail by American and European missionaries in



Nanking. On December 13, 1937, thirty Japanese soldiers came to the Chinese home at 5 Hsing Lu Kao in the southeastern part of Nanking. They killed the landlord when he opened the door, and then Mr. Hsia, a tenant who had fallen to his knees to beg them not to kill anyone else. When the landlord's wife asked why they murdered her husband, they shot her dead. The Japanese then dragged Mrs. Hsia from under a table in the guest hall where she had tried to hide with her one-year-old baby. They stripped her, raped her, then bayoneted her in the chest when they were finished. The soldiers thrust a perfume bottle in her vagina and also killed the baby by bayonet. Then they went into the next room, where they found Mrs. Hsia's parents and two teenage daughters. The grandmother, who tried to protect the girls from rape, was shot by revolver; the grandfather clasped the body of his wife and was killed immediately.

The soldiers then stripped the girls and took turns raping them: the sixteen-year-old by two or three men, the fourteen-year-old by three. The Japanese not only stabbed the older girl to death after raping her but rammed a bamboo cane into her vagina. The younger one was simply bayoneted and "spared the horrible treatment meted out to her sister and mother," a foreigner later wrote of the scene. The soldiers also bayoneted another sister, aged eight, when she hid with her four-year-old sister under the blankets of a bed. The four-year-old remained under the blankets so long she nearly suffocated. She was to endure brain damage for the rest of her life from the lack of oxygen.

Before leaving, the soldiers murdered the landlord's two children, aged four and two; they bayoneted the older child and split the head of the younger one with a sword. When it was safe to emerge, the eight-year-old survivor, who had been hiding under the blankets, crawled to the next room where she lay beside the body of her mother. Together with her four-year-old sister, they lived for fourteen days on rice crusts that their mother had prepared before the siege. When a member of the International Committee arrived at the house weeks after the slaughter, he saw that one young girl had been raped on the table. "While I

was there," he testified later, "the blood on the table [was] not all dry yet."

A similar story, no less grisly, involves a fifteen-year-old Chinese girl whose family was murdered before her eyes. The Japanese first killed her brother, whom they wrongly accused of being a Chinese soldier, then her brother's wife and her older sister because they both resisted rape, and finally her mother and father, who knelt on the floor begging the Japanese to spare the lives of their children. Before they died under the thrusts of Japanese bayonets, their last words urged the young girl to do whatever the enemy soldiers wanted from her.

The girl fainted. She revived to find herself naked on the floor in a strange, locked room. Someone had raped her while she had been unconscious. Her clothes had been taken from her, as they had been taken from other girls in the building. Her room was on the second floor of a building converted into barracks for two hundred Japanese soldiers. The women inside consisted of two groups: prostitutes, who were given their freedom and treated well, and respectable girls who had been kidnapped into sexual slavery. Of the latter group, at least one girl attempted suicide. For a month and a half the fifteen-year-old was raped two or three times a day. Eventually she became so diseased the Japanese left her alone. One day a kind Japanese officer who spoke Chinese approached her and asked why she was weeping. After hearing her story, he took her to Nanking by car, set her free inside the South Gate, and wrote down the name of Ginling College for her on a piece of paper. The girl was too sick to walk to Ginling the first day and took refuge in a Chinese house. Only on the second day did she reach Ginling, where International Committee members immediately rushed her to the hospital.

That girl was considered fortunate. Many other girls, tied naked to chairs, beds, or poles as permanent fixtures for rape, did not survive such treatment. Chinese witnesses described the body of an eleven-year-old girl who died after she was raped continuously for two days: "According to eyewitness reports, the blood-stained, swollen and ruptured area between

the girl's legs created a disgusting scene difficult for anyone to look at directly."

During the mass rape the Japanese destroyed children and infants, often because they were in the way. Eyewitness reports describe children and babies suffocating from clothes stuffed in their mouths or bayoneted to death because they wept as their mothers were being raped. American and European observers of the Rape of Nanking recorded numerous entries like this one: "415. February 3, about 5 P.M. at Chang Su Hsiang (near Ta Chung Chiao) three soldiers came and forced a woman to throw away her baby and after raping her they went away laughing."

Countless men died trying to protect their loved ones from rape. When the Japanese dragged away one woman from a mat shed and her husband intervened, they "stuck a wire through his nose and tied the other end of the wire to a tree just like one would tie up a bull." There they bayoneted him repeatedly despite the pleas of his mother, who rolled around on the ground, crying hysterically. The Japanese ordered the mother to go into the house or they would kill her. The son died from the wounds on the spot.

There seemed to be no limit to the Japanese capacity for human degradation and sexual perversion in Nanking. Just as some soldiers invented killing contests to break the monotony of murder, so did some invent games of recreational rape and torture when wearied by the glut of sex.

Perhaps one of the most brutal forms of Japanese entertainment was the impalement of vaginas. In the streets of Nanking, corpses of women lay with their legs splayed open, their orifices pierced by wooden rods, twigs, and weeds. It is painful, almost mind-numbing, to contemplate some of the other objects that were used to torment the Nanking women, who suffered almost unendurable ordeals. For instance, one Japanese soldier who raped a young woman thrust a beer bottle into her and shot her. Another rape victim was found with a golf stick rammed into her. And on December 22, in a neigh-

borhood near the gate of Tongjimen, the Japanese raped a barber's wife and then stuck a firecracker in her vagina. It blew up and killed her.

But not all of the victims were women. Chinese men were often sodomized or forced to perform a variety of repulsive sexual acts in front of laughing Japanese soldiers. At least one Chinese man was murdered because he refused to commit necrophilia with the corpse of a woman in the snow. The Japanese also delighted in trying to coerce men who had taken lifetime vows of celibacy to engage in sexual intercourse. A Chinese woman had tried to disguise herself as a man to pass through one of the gates of Nanking, but Japanese guards, who systematically searched all passing pedestrians by groping at their crotches, discovered her true sex. Gang rape followed, at which time a Buddhist monk had the misfortune to venture near the scene. The Japanese tried to force him to have sex with the woman they had just raped. When the monk protested, they castrated him, causing the poor man to bleed to death.

Some of the most sordid instances of sexual torture involved the degradation of entire families. The Japanese drew sadistic pleasure in forcing Chinese men to commit incest—fathers to rape their own daughters, brothers their sisters, sons their mothers. Guo Qi, a Chinese battalion commander stranded in Nanking for three months after the city fell, saw or heard of at least four or five instances in which the Japanese ordered sons to rape their mothers; those who refused were killed on the spot. His report is substantiated by the testimony of a German diplomat, who reported that one Chinese man who refused to rape his own mother was killed with saber strokes and that his mother committed suicide shortly afterwards.

Some families openly embraced death rather than participate in their own destruction. One such family was crossing the Yangtze River when two Japanese soldiers stopped them and demanded an inspection. Upon seeing the young women and girls in the boat, the soldiers raped them right in front of their parents and husbands. This was horrifying enough, but what the soldiers demanded next of the family devastated them. The soldiers wanted the old man of the family to rape

the women as well. Rather than obey, the entire family jumped into the river and drowned.

Once women were caught by Japanese soldiers, there was little hope for them, for most were killed immediately after rape.

But not all women submitted easily. Many were able to hide from the Japanese for months—in fuel stacks, under piles of grass or straw, in pig pens, on boats, in deserted houses. In the countryside women hid in covered holes in the earth—holes that Japanese soldiers tried to discover by stamping on the ground. One Buddhist nun and a little girl avoided rape and murder because they lay still in a ditch filled with bodies and feigned death for five days.

Women eluded rape using a variety of methods. Some used disguise—rubbing soot on their faces to appear old and diseased or shaving their heads to pass themselves off as men. (One clever young woman disguised herself as an old woman, hobbling about on a cane and even borrowing a little boy of six to carry on her back until she safely entered the Safety Zone at Ginling College.) Others feigned sickness, such as the woman who told Japanese soldiers she had given birth to a dead child four days before. Another woman took the advice of a Chinese captive to force her finger down her throat and vomit several times. (Her Japanese captors hastily expelled her from the building.) Some escaped by sheer quickness, ducking in and out of crowds, climbing over walls, with the Japanese in hot pursuit. One girl barely avoided assault by tripping up a Japanese soldier on the third floor of a house and sliding down a bamboo pole that a Chinese man propped up for her from the garden.

Once caught, women who struggled faced the possibility of torture as a warning to others who dared to resist the Japanese. Those who defied the Japanese were often found later with their eyes torn out, or their noses, ears, or breasts cut off. Few women dared fight their assailants, but there were scattered accounts of resistance. A schoolteacher gunned down five Japanese soldiers before being shot to death. The most famous story involves Li Xouying, a woman who not only suffered

thirty-seven bayonet wounds during her struggle against the Japanese but survived and remained robust enough to narrate and play-act the story almost sixty years later.

In 1937, eighteen-year-old Li Xouying was the bride of a military technician. When the government evacuated the capital, her husband left Nanking on the top of a train packed with Chinese soldiers. Li stayed behind because she was six to seven months pregnant and believed it was dangerous in her condition to board a crowded train.

Like many other Chinese civilians in Nanking, Li and her father fled into the foreign-run Safety Zone. They hid in the basement of an elementary school that had been converted into a refugee camp. But this camp, like others in the zone, was subject to repeated Japanese inspections and invasions. On December 18, a group of Japanese soldiers broke in and dragged the young men out of the school. The following morning they returned for the women. Fearful of what the Japanese would do to a pregnant housewife, Li made an impulsive decision. She tried to kill herself by slamming her head against the basement wall.

When she regained consciousness, she found herself lying on a small canvas cot on the floor of the basement. The Japanese were gone, but they had taken several young women with them. Wild thoughts raced through Li's head while she lay in a daze on the cot. If she ran out of the building, she might be throwing herself at Japanese rapists. But if she did nothing and waited, they would probably come back for her. Li decided to stay. If the Japanese did not return, all would be well and good, but if they did, she would fight them to the death. She would rather die, she told herself, than be raped by the Japanese.

Soon she heard the heavy footsteps of three Japanese soldiers coming down the stairs. Two of them seized a couple of women and dragged them screaming out of the room. The one who remained eyed Li intently as she lay immobile on the cot. Someone told him Li was sick, and he responded by kicking all the other people out of the room into the corridor.

Slowly the soldier walked back and forth, appraising her. Suddenly—before he quite realized what was happening—she made her move. She jumped from the cot, snatched his bayonet from his belt and flung her back against the wall. "He panicked," Li recalled. "He never thought a woman would fight back." He seized her wrist that held the bayonet, but Li clutched his collar with her free hand and bit his arms with all her might. Even though the soldier wore full battle gear and Li wore only a cotton *chipao*, which impeded movement, she put up a good fight. The two of them grappled and kicked until the soldier found himself overwhelmed and screamed for help.

The other soldiers ran in, no doubt incredulous at what they saw. They lunged toward her with their bayonets but failed to stab her effectively because their comrade was in the way. Because her opponent was so short and small, Li was able to jerk him completely off his feet and use him like a shield to parry their thrusts. But then the soldiers aimed their bayonets at her head, slashing her face with their blades and knocking out her teeth. Her mouth filled with blood, which she spit into their eyes. "Blood was on the walls, on the bed, on the floor, everywhere," Li remembered. "I had no fear in my mind. I was furious. My only thought was to fight and kill them." Finally a soldier plunged his bayonet into her belly and everything went black for her.

The soldiers left her for dead. When Li's body was brought before her father, he could not sense any breath coming from her and assumed the worst. He asked someone to carry her behind the school and to dig a pit for her grave. Fortunately, someone noticed before the burial that Li was still breathing and that bubbles of blood foamed from her mouth. Friends immediately rushed Li to Nanking University Hospital, where doctors stitched up her thirty-seven bayonet wounds. While unconscious, she miscarried that evening.

Word of Li's fight somehow reached her husband, who immediately asked the military for three months' leave and borrowed money to get back to Nanking. In August 1938, he returned and found his wife with her face swollen and cross-

hatched with scars and her newly shorn hair growing from her head like bristles.

Li would suffer both pain and embarrassment from her wounds for the rest of her life. Mucus leaked from a gaping hole on the side of her nose, and tears ran down her eyes during bad weather or bouts of illness. (Miraculously, although the Japanese had stabbed the whites of her eyes with their bayonets, Li did not go blind). Every time she looked in a mirror, she saw the scars that reminded her of that terrible day, December 19, 1938. "Now, after fifty-eight years, the wrinkles have covered the scars," she told me during my visit to her apartment in Nanking. "But when I was young, the scars on my face were obvious and terrible."

Li believes it was the combination of her personality and unique family background that gave her the will to fight back. Unlike other Chinese women, typically taught at an early age to be submissive, she came from a family completely devoid of feminine influence. Her mother died when she was only thirteen, forcing Li to grow up among men in a tough military family. Her father, brother, and uncles were either soldiers or policemen, and under their influence she became a tomboy. As a young girl, she also possessed a temper so short that her father dared not teach her kung fu, no doubt out of fear that she would terrorize the other kids on the block. Almost sixty years later, surrounded by her numerous children and grandchildren, Li had retained her health and passion for life—even her reputation for being ill-tempered. Her one regret, she said, was not learning kung fu from her father; otherwise, she might have enjoyed the pleasure of killing all three of the Japanese soldiers that day.

## THE DEATH TOLL

How many people died during the Rape of Nanking? When Miner Searle Bates, a history professor at Nanking University, was asked during the International Military Tribunal of the Far East (IMTFE) to give an estimate of the deaths, he answered:



"The question is so big, I don't know where to begin. . . . The total spread of this killing was so extensive that no one can give a complete picture of it."

The Chinese military specialist Liu Fang-chu proposed the figure of 430,000. Officials at the Memorial Hall of the Victims of the Nanking Massacre by Japanese Invaders and the procurator of the District Court of Nanking in 1946 claimed at least 300,000 were killed. The IMTFE judges concluded that more than 260,000 people were killed in Nanking. Fujiwara Akira, a Japanese historian, gives the figure of approximately 200,000. John Rabe, who never conducted a systematic count and left Nanking in February, before the slaughter ended, estimated that only 50,000–60,000 were killed. The Japanese author Hata Ikuhiko claims that the number was between 38,000 and 42,000. Still others in Japan place the number as low as 3,000. In 1994 archival evidence emerged from a former Japanese-owned railway company in Manchuria to reveal that one burial squad alone disposed of more than 30,000 bodies in Nanking between January and March 1938.

Perhaps no one has made a more thorough study of the statistics than Sun Zhaiwei, a historian at the Jiangsu Academy of Social Sciences. In a 1990 scholarly paper entitled "The Nanking Massacre and the Nanking Population," he reports that, according to census reports, the population in Nanking in 1937 exceeded 1 million before hostilities broke out between Japan and China. Using Chinese archival material, memoirs from Chinese military officials, and reports of the Nanking branch of the Red Cross, Sun determined that at the time of Japanese occupation there were at least half a million long-term residents in the city (the rest had already left the city), plus 90,000 Chinese soldiers and tens of thousands of migrants—a total of approximately 600,000 people in Nanking, perhaps even 700,000.

Sun gives his estimate in a second paper. The Nanking city archives and the No. 2 National Archives of China contained burial records submitted by private families, local charitable organizations, and the *Nanjing zizhi weiyuanhui*—the Chinese puppet government under the Japanese. After carefully examin-

ing these records, Sun found that charitable organizations in Nanking buried at least 185,000 bodies, private individuals at least 35,000, and the Japanese-controlled local government more than 7,400. (Some of the burial records are so detailed they include categories for even the sex of the victims and the location of the disposal.) Using Chinese burial records alone, Sun calculated that the number of dead from the Rape of Nanking exceeded the figure of 227,400.

However, this statistic balloons still larger if one factors in a stunning confession made by a Japanese prisoner almost four decades before Sun's paper was written. In 1954, while awaiting trial at the Fuxuan war criminal camp in the northeastern province of Liaoning, Ohta Hisao, a Japanese imperial army major, submitted a forty-four-page report in which he confessed that the Japanese army burned, dumped, or buried bodies in a massive disposal effort. Most of the bodies came from Hsiakwan, the area near the river northwest of Nanking. On the waterfront the Japanese piled fifty bodies onto each waiting boat, then took them to the middle of the river to dump overboard. Trucks carried bodies to other areas where they were burned and buried to eliminate evidence of the massacre. For three days starting on December 15, 1937, Ohta's army unit dumped 19,000 bodies of Chinese victims into the Nanking River, while a neighboring unit disposed of 81,000 bodies and other units got rid of 50,000—a total of some 150,000 bodies. By adding Ohta's figure to his tally of Chinese burial record statistics, Sun concluded that the total number of corpses amounted to a staggering 377,400—a figure that surpasses the death toll for the atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.

Even if skeptics dismiss Ohta's confession as a lie, one should keep in mind that even without his testimony the burial records at Nanking offer convincing evidence that the death toll of the massacre was, at the very least, in the 200,000 range. Sun's research is corroborated by court exhibits that I unearthed from IMTFE records (see table on page 102). By adding together the burial estimates of charitable organizations (later mentioned in Sun's paper) and the body counts made by other individuals (not mentioned in Sun's paper), the tribunal

concluded that approximately 260,000 people were killed during the Nanking massacre. It is important to remember that the IMTFE number does not include Japanese burial statistics of the Chinese dead, which could push the figure into the 300,000 or even 400,000 range.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VICTIMS OF  
JAPANESE MASSACRE IN NANKING

Tsun-shan-tang . . . . .	112,266
Red Swastika Society . . . . .	43,071
Shia Kwan District (sic) . . . . .	26,100
Stated by Mr. Lu Su . . . . .	57,400
Stated by Messrs. Jui, Chang, and Young . . . . .	7,000 or more
Stated by Mr. Wu . . . . .	2,000 or more
Stated on the Tomb of the Unknown Victims . . . . .	3,000 or more
TOTAL (approximately) . . . . .	260,000

SOURCE: Document no. 1702, box 134, IMTFE records, court exhibits, 1948, World War II War Crimes Records Collection, entry 14, record group 238, National Archives.

In recent years other scholars have bolstered Sun's study and given credence to the argument that the death toll at Nanking may have surpassed 300,000 people. For instance, in his paper "Let the Whole World Know the Nanking Massacre," Wu Tien-wei, professor emeritus of history at Southern Illinois University, estimates that the population of the city before its fall was approximately 630,000 people, a figure he concedes is far from exact but may be relatively close to the actual figure. After providing a detailed historiography of the body count research and examining the numbers carefully, he concludes that the

death toll of the massacre exceeded 300,000 people—probably 340,000 people, of which 190,000 were killed collectively and 150,000 individually.

The authors James Yin and Shi Young obtained a number on the same scale—approximately 355,000—after conducting their own investigation. Although their figure already represents the high end of the spectrum of death toll estimates, Yin and Young believe that the actual number of people killed in Nanking far exceeds the number they have been able to unearth from the records. They dismiss arguments from other experts who believe that considerable overlap may exist between death statistics and who suggest, for instance, that many of the bodies the Japanese dumped in the river were washed onshore, reburied, and tallied twice in the body count. Any corpse that washed up on land, they contend, would have been buried next to the river rather than in some remote location far from the river, but according to their research, most of the burial grounds were miles away from the banks of the Yangtze. It defies common sense, they argue, that the corpses, in advanced stages of decay from exposure, would be transported up hills or mountains or across fields for burial. Moreover, Yin and Young discovered through interviews with survivors that family members of rape-and-murder victims usually buried their dead immediately and neglected to report the burials to the authorities. Since their study tabulates numbers only from the reports of mass killings—rather than individual, random murders—Yin and Young believe that the total number of deaths from the Nanking massacre lies well in the 400,000 range.

There is even compelling evidence that the Japanese themselves believed at the time of the massacre that the death toll at Nanking may have been as high as 300,000. The evidence is significant because not only was it generated by the Japanese themselves but it was done so during the first month of the massacre, when the killing was far from over. On January 17, 1938, Foreign Minister Hirota Koki in Tokyo relayed the following message to his contacts in Washington, D.C., a message that American intelligence intercepted, deciphered, and later translated into English

on February 1, 1938 (parentheses in the original):


Since return (to) Shanghai a few days ago I investigated reported atrocities committed by Japanese army in Nanking and elsewhere. Verbal accounts (of) reliable eye-witnesses and letters from individuals whose credibility (is) beyond question afford convincing proof (that) Japanese Army behaved and (is) continuing (to) behave in (a) fashion reminiscent (of) Attila (and) his Huns. (Not) less than three hundred thousand Chinese civilians slaughtered, many cases (in) cold blood.

It is tempting to suggest that if Chiang Kai-shek had pulled out his armies during the mass government evacuation from Nanking in November and left behind a defenseless city, perhaps wholesale massacre could have been averted. But a minute's thought shows the weakness in that argument. The Japanese, after all, had spent the preceding few months systematically destroying entire villages and cities on their warpath to Nanking and committing similar atrocities elsewhere. Clearly they needed no provocation from the Chinese for their actions. All we can say for certain is that a city devoid of Chinese soldiers would have—at the very least—taken away the Japanese excuse that serial executions were necessary to eliminate the soldiers hiding among the civilian population. But there is no evidence to suggest that it would have changed their actions.

It is also tempting to suggest that if Chiang had refrained from ordering a senseless last-minute withdrawal from Nanking and had instead fought to the last man to save the city, the city's fate would have been different. But here again we must be careful. Head-to-head combat would certainly not have worked. The Japanese were much better armed and trained and would surely have overcome the Chinese forces sooner or later. But a lengthy, drawn-out struggle using guerrilla-style tactics might have demoralized the Japanese and elevated the Chinese. If nothing else, many more Japanese soldiers would have died fighting the Chinese and their arrogance toward the Chinese soldier would have been muted by a fierce resistance.

## 5

# THE NANKING SAFETY ZONE



IN THE HISTORY of every war, there are always a few rare individuals who emerge as beacons of hope for the persecuted. In the United States the Quakers freed their own slaves and helped establish the Underground Railroad. In Europe during World War II, Oskar Schindler, a Nazi, expended his fortune to save twelve hundred Jews from the Auschwitz gas chambers, and Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, saved more than one hundred thousand Jews by giving them false passports. Who can forget Mies Giep, the Austrian woman who together with others hid the young Anne Frank and her family in an Amsterdam attic?

Dark times paralyze most people, but some very few, for reasons most of us will never understand, are able to set aside all caution and do things even they could not imagine themselves doing in ordinary times.

It is hard to talk about a bright spot in the horror that is the Rape of Nanking, but if one can, it is surely to shine a light on the actions of a small band of Americans and Europeans who risked their lives to defy the Japanese invaders and rescue hundreds of thousands of Chinese refugees from almost certain extermination. These courageous men and women created the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. This is their story.

The decision to create a safety zone in the city of Nanking arose almost spontaneously, within weeks of the collapse of Shanghai. In November 1937, Father Jacquinet de Bessage, a French priest, established a neutral area in Shanghai to shelter 450,000 Chinese refugees whose homes had been destroyed by the invading Japanese soldiers. When the Presbyterian missionary W. Plumer Mills learned of Bessage's project, he suggested to his friends that a similar zone be created in Nanking. Mills and some two dozen other people (mostly American, but also German, Danish, Russian, and Chinese) ultimately designated a region slightly west of the center of the city as a safety zone. Within the zone were situated Nanking University, Ginling Women's Arts and Science College, the American embassy, and various Chinese government buildings. In setting up the zone, the committee sought to offer refuge for noncombatants caught in the cross-fire between the Japanese and Chinese militaries. The foreigners had every intention of shutting the zone down a few days or weeks after the city passed safely into Japanese hands.

The idea was not universally accepted at first. The Japanese, for one, flatly refused to honor it. And as enemy troops approached the city, the zone committee heard urgent pleas not only from friends and family but from Chinese, Japanese, and Western officials to abandon the project at once and flee for their lives. In early December the American embassy staff insisted that the zone leaders join them onboard the USS *Panay*, a gunboat packed with diplomats, journalists, and Western and Chinese refugees as it prepared to move upriver away from Nanking. But the zone leaders politely declined the offer, and after giving them a final warning, the diplomats on the *Panay*

sailed away on December 9, 1937, leaving the remaining foreigners to their fate.

Interestingly enough, the *Panay* would later be bombed and machine-gunned by Japanese aviators. On the afternoon of December 12, Japanese aviators sank the gunboat without warning, killing two people and wounding numerous others, even circling over the area repeatedly as if they planned to exterminate the survivors, who hid under a thicket of riverbank reeds. The reasons for the attack were unclear. The Japanese later claimed that their aviators lost their cool judgment in the heat of battle and that fog or smoke prevented them from seeing the American flags on the *Panay*, but this claim was later proven to be demonstrably false. (Not only was the day of the bombing sunny and cloudless, but the Japanese aviators had received explicit orders to bomb the *Panay*, orders the aviators carried out reluctantly only after vehement protests and arguments.) Today some suspect that the bombing was a test to see how the Americans would react, while others believe it was the result of internal politics within the Japanese high command. But whatever the reason behind the attack, the city of Nanking turned out to be a safer place for the remaining foreigners than the *Panay*.

The first refugees to enter the Nanking Safety Zone were those who had lost their homes to aerial bombardments or had abandoned homes on the outskirts of the city in the face of the approaching Japanese army. Soon these first refugees packed the camps so densely that it was said that many had to stand without sleeping for several days until new camps were added. Once the city fell, the zone housed not just thousands but hundreds of thousands of people. For the next six weeks the committee had to find a way to provide these refugees with the bare necessities of survival—food, shelter, and medical care. The committee members also had to protect them from physical harm. Often this required on-the-spot intervention to prevent the Japanese military from proceeding with some threatened action. And through it all, though no one asked them to do so, they documented and broadcasted Japanese outrages to the world. In doing so, they



left a written record for posterity of what they had witnessed.

In retrospect, it seems almost miraculous that some two dozen foreigners managed to do everything they did while fifty thousand Japanese soldiers ripped apart the city. Remember, by occupation these men and women were missionaries, doctors, professors, and executives—not seasoned military officers. Their lifestyles had been sheltered and leisurely. “We were not rich,” one woman said of that period, “but a little foreign money went a long way in China.” Many were ensconced in luxurious mansions, surrounded by teams of servants.

Strangely, because of an incident in Nanking a decade earlier, most expected to have more trouble with the Chinese than the Japanese. Those who had been in Nanking in 1927 remembered that during the Nationalist invasion of the city, Chinese troops recklessly killed foreigners and besieged a group of them, including the American consul and his wife, in a house on top of Socony Hill. (“Would they kill us?” one woman wrote of that horrible time. “Would they torture us as in the Boxer? Would they do worse? Torture the children before our eyes? I did not let my mind touch what they might do to us as women.”) Indeed, one of the foreign eyewitnesses of the 1937 massacre admitted: “We were more prepared for excesses from the fleeing Chinese . . . but never, never from the Japanese. On the contrary, we had expected that with the appearance of the Japanese the return of peace, quiet and prosperity would occur.”

The heroic efforts of the Americans and Europeans during this period are so numerous (their diaries run for thousands of pages) that it is impossible to narrate all of their deeds here. For this reason, I have decided to concentrate on the activities of three individuals—a German businessman, an American surgeon, and an American missionary professor—before describing the committee’s achievements as a whole. On the surface, the three could not have been more different.

## THE NAZI WHO SAVED NANKING

Perhaps the most fascinating character to emerge from the history of the Rape of Nanking is the German businessman John Rabe. To most of the Chinese in the city, he was a hero, "the living Buddha of Nanking," the legendary head of the International Safety Zone who saved hundreds of thousands of Chinese lives. But to the Japanese, Rabe was a strange and unlikely savior. For he was not only a German national—a citizen of a country allied with Japan—but the leader of the Nazi Party in Nanking.

In 1996 I began an investigation into the life of John Rabe and eventually unearthed thousands of pages of diaries that he and other Nazis kept during the Rape. These diaries led me to conclude that John Rabe was "the Oskar Schindler of China."

Prior to the Rape, Rabe had led a relatively peaceful though well-traveled life. The son of a sea captain, he was born in Hamburg, Germany, on November 23, 1882. After completing his apprenticeship in Hamburg he worked a few years in Africa and then in 1908 moved to China, where he found employment at the Peking office of the Siemens China Company. In 1931 he transferred to the Nanking office, selling telephones and electrical equipment to the Chinese government. Bald and bespectacled, dressed in conservative suits and bow ties, he looked like a typical, middle-aged Western businessman in the city. Soon he became a pillar of the German community in Nanking, administering his own German school for elementary and junior high school students.

As the years went by, Rabe became a staunch supporter of Nazism and the representative town leader for the Nazi Party in Nanking. In 1938 he would tell German audiences that "I believe not only in the correctness of our political system but, as an organizer of the party, I am behind the system 100 percent."

Decades later his granddaughter, Ursula Reinhardt, insists that Rabe saw the Nazi Party primarily as a socialist organization and did not support the persecution of Jews and other ethnic groups in Germany. This may well be true. During his

visits to various ministries in Nanking, Rabe repeatedly summed up his Nazi philosophy in socialist terms: "We are soldiers of work, we are a government of workers, we are friends to the worker, we will never leave the worker's side in times of crisis."

When most of his fellow German nationals, on the advice of friends and embassy officials, departed China long before the Japanese military reached the gates of the city, Rabe chose to stay and was soon elected the head of the Safety Zone. In fact, even when Japanese embassy officials met with him and suggested more strongly that he leave, he remained. Dispatched by his superiors to protect Rabe during the fall of Nanking, Japanese Major Oka asked him: "Why in the devil did you stay? Why do you want to involve yourself in our military affairs? What does all this matter to you? You haven't lost anything here!"

Rabe paused for a moment, then gave Oka his answer. "I have been living here in China for over thirty years," Rabe said. "My kids and grandchildren were born here, and I am happy and successful here. I have always been treated well by the Chinese people, even during the war. If I had spent thirty years in Japan and were treated just as well by the Japanese people, you can be assured that, in a time of emergency, such as the situation China faces now, I would not leave the side of the people in Japan."

This answer satisfied the Japanese major, who respected the concept of loyalty. "He took a step back, mumbled some words about Samurai obligations, and bowed deeply," Rabe wrote of the incident.

But Rabe had an even more personal reason not to walk away and protect himself—he felt responsible for the safety of his Chinese employees, a team of Siemens mechanics who maintained the turbines in the city's main power plant, the telephones and clocks in every ministry, the alarms in the police stations and the banks, and an enormous X-ray machine at the central hospital. "What I only had a premonition of then," Rabe wrote, "—but what I now know—is that all of them would have been killed or severely injured if I had left their side."

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Earlier that year Rabe had endured countless air raids in Nanking with scarcely more than a foxhole and a few planks of wood for protection. Clothing was also scarce, especially after Rabe made the mistake around late September of storing his entire wardrobe on the *Kutwo*, a ship used to transport German nationals out of Nanking, for safekeeping. Upon its arrival at Hankow, the *Kutwo* dumped its unclaimed luggage, leaving Rabe with only two suits, one of which he gave to a Chinese refugee whom he believed needed it more than he did.

But his biggest concern was not for his own personal safety or well-being but for the establishment of the Safety Zone. The committee members wanted the zone to be free of all military activity, but the Japanese army refused to recognize it as neutral territory, and the committee found it next to impossible to dislodge Chinese General Tang Sheng-chih's men from the area—especially because Tang's own villa stood within it. For Rabe the final straw came when the Chinese army not only refused to evacuate the area but erected its gun turrets on streets inside the zone. Losing his patience, Rabe threatened to quit his position as head of the Safety Zone and tell the world the reason why unless Tang evacuated his troops from the area immediately. "They promised me that my wishes would be respected," Rabe said, "but the fulfillment itself took a bit longer."

Rabe sensed the need to call on higher authorities for help. On November 25, he wired Adolf Hitler to request the fuehrer's "kindly intercession in asking that the Japanese government grant the building of a neutral zone for those who are not fighting to battle for Nanking." At the same time Rabe also sent a telegram to his friend General Counsel Mr. Kriebel: "Asking cordially for support of my request of the Fuehrer . . . which otherwise would make a terrible bloodbath unavoidable. Heil Hitler! Rabe—Siemens representative and head of the International Committee in Nanking."

Neither Hitler nor Kriebel replied, but Rabe soon noticed

something unusual in the Japanese bombing pattern in the city. Before he sent the telegrams, Japanese planes bombed areas within Nanking indiscriminately; afterwards they attacked only military targets, such as military schools, airstrips, and arsenals. Wrote Rabe, "This . . . was the goal of my telegram and it made quite a lasting impression on my American colleagues."

But his triumph was short-lived as one crisis loomed after another. Originally Rabe and his colleagues hoped to reserve the empty buildings in the zone for the poorest citizens of Nanking. To avoid a rush of people, the committee had pasted posters all over the city, urging refugees to rent housing from friends. But so many people surged into the area of two and a half square miles that Rabe soon found himself with fifty thousand more residents than he had expected even in the worst-case scenario. The refugees not only packed the buildings but spilled forth onto lawns, trenches, and bomb dugouts. Entire families slept in the open streets, while hundreds of mat dwellings mushroomed next to the American embassy. By the time the city fell, the Safety Zone—its borders lined by white flags and sheets marked with the red cross symbol within a red circle—was a swarming "human beehive" of 250,000 refugees.

Sanitation soon posed another nightmare. The filth in the camps—especially the toilets—enraged Rabe, and it took a tirade on his part to get the refugee center on the Siemens grounds in acceptable order. Afterwards, when Rabe inspected the Siemens camp, he found not only were the toilets in better shape but every wall on the Siemens grounds had been repaired. "Nobody would tell me where the beautiful new bricks came from," Rabe wrote. "I determined later on that many of the newer buildings in the area were considerably shorter than before."

But the shortage of food created the worst headache of all for the zone leaders. In early December the mayor of Nanking gave the International Committee thirty thousand *tan* (or two thousand tons) of rice and ten thousand bags of flour to feed the population. But the food was stored outside of the city, and

the committee lacked the necessary trucks to bring it into the zone. The Chinese military had already commandeered most of the vehicles in the area to transport twenty thousand men and five thousand cases of Peking Palace treasures out of the capital; desperate civilians and individual soldiers had stolen virtually all the rest. With no alternative open to them, Rabe and the remaining foreigners drove frantically through Nanking, using their own automobiles to haul as much rice as possible into the zone. As the Japanese bombarded the city, the foreigners continued the deliveries; one driver actually lost an eye from flying shrapnel. In the end the zone leaders secured only a fraction of the total food available—ten thousand *tan* of rice and one thousand bags of flour—but the food went far to stave off hunger for many of the refugees in the zone.

On December 9, recognizing the dire situation ahead, the committee tried to negotiate a three-day cease-fire (see chapter 3), during which the Japanese could keep their positions and the Chinese could withdraw peacefully from the walled city. However, Chiang Kai-shek did not agree to the cease-fire, prompting the Japanese to begin a furious bombardment of Nanking the following day. On December 12, the committee was again approached by the Chinese military, this time to negotiate a surrender, but again the plan fell through.

From that point on, there was little Rabe could do that day but watch and wait for the inevitable. He recorded the events as they unfolded, hour by hour. At 6:30 P.M. on December 12 he wrote: "The cannons on the Purple Mountain fire continuously—there is lighting and thunder all around it. Suddenly, the entire mountain is in flames—some houses and munitions depots are also on fire." At that moment Rabe recalled an ancient Chinese saying that portended the city's doom: "When the Purple Mountain burns . . . then Nanking is lost."

At 8:00 P.M., Rabe watched as the skies to the south of the city glowed red with flames. Then he heard frantic knocking on both gates of his house: Chinese women and children were begging for entrance, men were scaling the garden wall behind

his German school, and people were cramming themselves into the foxholes in his garden, even ducking under the giant German flag he had used to warn pilots from bombing his property. The cries and knocking increased until Rabe could bear it no longer. He flung open the gates to let the crowd in. But the noise only intensified as the night wore on. Exasperated, Rabe donned a steel helmet and ran through his garden, yelling at everyone to shut up.

At 11:30 P.M., Rabe received a surprise visitor. It was Christian Kröger, a fellow Nazi Party member in his midthirties who worked for the German engineering firm of Carlowitz & Company. The tall, blond engineer had come to China to oversee the construction of a large steel mill but found himself, like Rabe, in the midst of Nanking's insanity. The International Committee had appointed Kröger its treasurer.

Kröger had stopped by to tell Rabe that Chungshan Road was littered with weapons and supplies that the Chinese military had left behind during its retreat. Someone had even abandoned a bus, offering it for sale for twenty dollars.

"Do you think someone will take it?" Kröger asked.

"But Christian, how can they?" Rabe said.

"Na. I ordered the man to come into my office in the morning."

Finally, the din around his house began to diminish. The exhausted Rabe, who had not had time even to change clothes for two days, lay back in bed, trying to relax as the society he knew and loved collapsed around him. He knew that the Ministry of Communication building was burning down and that the city would fall any minute. Rabe reassured himself that things would only get better, not worse, from this point on. "You don't have to be scared of the Japanese," his Chinese colleagues had told him. "As soon as they have taken over the city, peace and order will prevail—the rail connections with Shanghai will be quickly rebuilt and the stores will return to their normal functions." Before he fell asleep, Rabe thought, "Thank God that the worst has been overcome!"

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The next morning Rabe awoke to the sound of yet another air raid. Apparently not all of the Chinese army had been forced from the city, he thought. It was only 5:00 A.M., so he lay down again. Like most people in the city, Rabe had become so jaded by air raids that the blasts no longer bothered him.

Later that morning Rabe explored the city to check out the extent of the damage. In the streets lay numerous Chinese corpses, many of them civilians who had been shot in the back. He watched a group of Japanese soldiers push their way into a German coffeehouse. When Rabe chastised them for stealing, pointing to the German flags on the house, an English-speaking Japanese soldier snapped: "We are hungry! If you want to complain, go to the Japanese embassy. They will pay for it!" The Japanese soldiers also told Rabe that their supply column had not arrived, and they could not count on the column for any nourishment even if it did arrive. Later Rabe learned that the soldiers looted the coffeehouse, then set it afire.

Worse was to come. In the distance, Rabe saw Japanese soldiers marching north from the south side of Nanking to occupy the rest of the city. To avoid them, he immediately drove north and reached the main street of the city, Chungshan Road, stopping at the Red Cross hospital in the Foreign Ministry. The Chinese staff had fled the premises, and bodies were everywhere—clogging the rooms, corridors, and even the exits from the hospital.

That day Rabe encountered the remains of the Chinese army—hungry and exhausted stragglers who had failed to cross the Yangtze River to safety. Driving through Shansi Road Circle, he met four hundred Chinese troops, all of them still armed, marching in the direction of the advancing Japanese army. It was then that Rabe had a sudden "humanitarian impulse" that was to haunt his conscience for months, if not years, afterwards. Warning them about the Japanese troops to the south, Rabe advised the Chinese soldiers to throw away their machine guns and join the refugees in the Safety Zone. After a short discussion, they agreed and followed Rabe into the zone.

Similarly, when hundreds of Chinese soldiers found themselves trapped on the northern side of the city, unable to secure



passage across the river, many broke into the Safety Zone, begging the American and European administrators to save their lives. The committee members were uncertain as to whether they should help them. After all, they had created the zone as a sanctuary for civilians, not soldiers. The committee tried to resolve the dilemma by addressing the issue with Japanese army headquarters but got no further than a captain on Han Chung Road.

Moved by the plight of the soldiers, the committee eventually caved in to their pleas. Like Rabe, they told the soldiers that if they laid down their arms, the Japanese might treat them mercifully. Then they helped the soldiers disarm and housed them in various buildings within the neutral area. In the confusion, many of the soldiers stripped off their uniforms and mingled with the civilians in the zone.

The next day John Rabe wrote a long letter explaining the situation to a Japanese military commander. He begged the Japanese to exercise mercy toward the former soldiers and to treat them humanely according to the recognized laws of war. To Rabe's great relief, a Japanese officer promised him that the lives of the Chinese soldiers would be spared.

But relief turned into horror when the Japanese betrayed Rabe and seized the disarmed soldiers for execution. If Rabe had hoped that the Japanese would not be able to separate the troops from the hundreds of thousands of civilians, he was sorely mistaken. The Japanese detected virtually every one of the former soldiers by examining their hands, knowing that the daily use of guns caused calluses on certain areas on the fingers of soldiers. They also examined shoulders for backpack marks, foreheads and hair for indentations from military caps, and even feet for blisters caused from months of marching.

During a staff conference the night of December 14, the committee learned that the Japanese had rounded up thirteen hundred men in a Safety Zone camp near the headquarters to shoot them. "We knew that there were a number of ex-soldiers among them, but Rabe had been promised by an officer that afternoon that their lives would be spared," George Fitch, the

YMCA representative, wrote in his diary of the incident. "It was now all too obvious what they were going to do. The men were lined up and roped together in groups of about 100 by soldiers with bayonets fixed; those who had hats had them roughly torn off and thrown to the ground—and then by the lights of our headlights we watched them marched away to their doom."

"Did I have the right to act that way?" Rabe wrote later of his decision to quarter the soldiers in the zone. "Did I handle that correctly?"

For the next few days Rabe watched helplessly as the Japanese dragged thousands more soldiers from the zone and executed them. The Japanese killed thousands of innocent men who happened to have calluses on their fingers, foreheads, or feet—men who were ricksha coolies, manual laborers, and police officers. Rabe later witnessed the Red Swastika Society, a charitable Buddhist organization in the city, pull more than 120 corpses from a single pond. (In a later report, Rabe pointed out that several ponds in Nanking actually disappeared because they were so filled with corpses.)

As both head of the International Committee and local head of the Nazi Party, a position that was certain to carry some weight with the Japanese authorities, Rabe wrote letter after letter to the Japanese embassy. At first he was unfailingly polite, toning down his anger because of his perceived obligation, as a German citizen and Nazi leader, to maintain the relationship between the two embassies. He asked the American members of the committee to let him review their letters to the Japanese embassy so that he could "put some honey" into them as well. He maintained his polite tone in his personal visits to the embassy.

In turn, the Japanese diplomats received Rabe's letters and visits with gracious smiles and official courtesy, but in the end he always received the same answer: "We shall inform the military authorities." As days passed, each bringing its own unrelenting onslaught of fresh atrocities, Rabe's written

communication to the Japanese grew increasingly hostile, punctuated with exclamations of outrage:

All 27 Westerners in the city at that time and our Chinese population were totally surprised by the reign of robbery, rapine, and killing initiated by your soldiers on the 14th!

We did not find a single Japanese patrol either in the Zone or at the entrances!

Yesterday, in broad daylight, several women at the Seminary were raped right in the middle of a large room filled with men, women and children! We 22 Westerners cannot feed 200,000 Chinese civilians and protect them night and day. That is the duty of the Japanese authorities. If you can give them protection, we can help feed them!

If this process of terrorism continues, it will be next to impossible to locate workers to get the essential services started.

Gradually Rabe and the rest of the International Committee begin to read the real message in the diplomat's answers—it was the military, not the embassy, calling the shots. Fukuda Tokuyasu, secretary of the Japanese embassy, told Rabe as much by saying: "The Japanese army wants to make it very bad for the town, but we, the embassy, will try to prevent it." During the great Rape some Japanese embassy officials actually suggested that the International Committee seek publicity in Japan directly so that public opinion would force the Japanese government to take action. But at the same time another embassy official urged Rabe to remain silent, warning him that "if you tell the newspaper reporters anything bad, you will have the entire Japanese army against you."

Finally, with only his status as an official of an allied nation for protection, Rabe did what now seems the unthinkable: he began to roam about the city, trying to prevent atrocities himself.

Whenever he drove through Nanking, some man would inevitably leap out and stop the car to beg Rabe to stop a rape in

progress—a rape that usually involved a sister, a wife, or a daughter. Rabe would then let the man climb into the car and direct him to the scene of the rape. Once there, he would chase Japanese soldiers away from their prey, on one occasion even bodily lifting a soldier sprawled on top of a young girl. He knew these expeditions were highly dangerous (“The Japanese had pistols and bayonets and I . . . had only party symbols and my swastika armband,” Rabe wrote in his report to Hitler), but nothing could deter him from making them—not even the risk of death.

His diary entry on January 1, 1938, is typical: “The mother of a young attractive girl called out to me, and throwing herself on her knees, crying, said I should help her. Upon entering [the house] I saw a Japanese soldier lying completely naked on a young girl, who was crying hysterically. I yelled at this swine, in any language it would be understood, ‘Happy New Year!’ and he fled from there, naked and with his pants in his hand.”

Rabe was appalled by the rape in the city. In the streets he passed scores of female corpses, raped and mutilated, next to the charred remains of their homes. “Groups of 3 to 10 marauding soldiers would begin by traveling through the city and robbing whatever there was to steal,” Rabe wrote in his report to Hitler.

They would continue by raping the women and girls and killing anything and anyone that offered any resistance, attempted to run away from them or simply happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. There were girls under the age of 8 and women over the age of 70 who were raped and then, in the most brutal way possible, knocked down and beat up. We found corpses of women on beer glasses and others who had been lanced by bamboo shoots. I saw the victims with my own eyes—I talked to some of them right before their deaths and had their bodies brought to the morgue at the Kulo hospital so that I could be personally convinced that all of these reports had touched on the truth.

As he walked through the burning wreckage of his beloved city, Rabe could read, on almost every street corner, beautiful

Japanese posters that proclaimed: "Trust Our Japanese Army—They Will Protect and Feed You."

Determined to save Chinese lives, Rabe sheltered as many people as he could, turning his house and office into sanctuaries for Siemens employees and their families. Rabe also harbored hundreds of Chinese women on his property, permitting them to live in tiny straw huts in his backyard. With these women Rabe developed a warning system to protect them from Japanese rapists. Whenever Japanese soldiers scaled the wall of his yard, the women would blow a whistle and send Rabe running out into the yard to chase the offenders away. This happened so frequently that Rabe rarely left his home at night, fearful that Japanese intruders would commit an orgy of rape in his absence. He complained about the situation to Japanese military officers, but they failed to take the matter seriously. Even when Rabe caught a Japanese soldier raping a woman in one of the backyard straw huts, a military officer did nothing to punish the rapist except slap him across the face.

If Rabe was frustrated by the futility of the situation—by the limitations of what he and some twenty other individuals could accomplish to protect hundreds of thousands of civilians from more than fifty thousand Japanese soldiers—he did not show it. He knew it was crucial to hide any sign of weakness from the Japanese and to overwhelm them with "a domineering presence and energy."

Fortunately, his status as a Nazi caused several Japanese soldiers to hesitate before committing further mayhem—at least in his presence. George Fitch, the local YMCA secretary, wrote that "when any of them objects [Rabe] thrusts his Nazi armband in their face and points to his Nazi decoration, the highest in the country, and asks them if they know what that means. It always works!" The Japanese soldiers appeared to respect—at times even fear—the Nazis of Nanking. While the Japanese privates did not hesitate to beat up the Americans, charge at them with bayonets, or even to push one American missionary down a flight of stairs, they exercised considerable

restraint in their dealings with Rabe and his countrymen. Once, when four Japanese soldiers in the midst of raping and looting saw Eduard Sperling's swastika armband, they screamed "Deutsche! Deutsche!" and ran away. On another occasion, the swastika probably saved Rabe's life. One evening Japanese soldiers broke into his property, and Rabe confronted them with his flashlight. One of them reached for his pistol, as if to shoot Rabe, but stopped when he realized it would be "bad business to shoot a German subject."

If the Japanese respected Rabe, the Chinese refugee community revered him. To them he was the man who rescued daughters from sexual slavery and sons from machine-gun fire. Rabe's very presence sometimes touched off riots in Safety Zone camps. During one of his visits to the zone, thousands of Chinese women flung themselves to the ground before him, weeping and begging for protection, declaring they would rather commit suicide on the spot than leave the zone to be raped and tortured.

Rabe tried to keep hope alive for his refugees in the midst of their terror. He hosted little birthday celebrations for the children born to refugee women living in his backyard. Each newborn received a gift: \$10 for baby boys and \$9.50 for baby girls. (As Rabe explained in his report to Hitler—"Girls in China aren't worth as much as boys.") Typically, when a boy was born, he received Rabe's name, and if a girl was born, she received his wife's name, Dora.

Rabe's courage and generosity ultimately won the respect of the other members of the International Committee, even those fundamentally opposed to Nazism. George Fitch wrote to his friends that he would "almost wear a Nazi badge" to keep fellowship with Rabe and the other Germans in Nanking. Even Dr. Robert Wilson, a man thoroughly repulsed by Nazism, sang Rabe's praises in letters to his family: "He is well up in Nazi circles and after coming into such close contact with him as we have for the past few weeks and discover[ing] what a splendid man he is and what a tremendous heart he has, it is hard to reconcile his personality with his adulation of 'Der Fuhrer.'"

## THE ONLY SURGEON IN NANKING

It is not surprising that Robert Wilson stayed in Nanking when virtually every other surgeon left, for Nanking, the city of his birth and boyhood, had always commanded a special place in his heart. Born in 1904, Wilson was reared by a family of Methodist missionaries who had shaped many of Nanking's educational institutions. His uncle, John Ferguson, founded the University of Nanking. His father worked as an ordained minister and middle-school instructor in the city, while his mother, a college-educated Greek scholar who spoke several languages fluently, ran her own school for missionary children. As a teenager, Robert Wilson even learned geometry from Pearl Buck, who would later win the Nobel Prize in Literature for her novels about China. Thriving in this environment, and displaying exceptional intellectual promise, Wilson won, at age seventeen, a scholarship to Princeton University. Upon graduation from college, he taught Latin and mathematics for two years at a high school in Connecticut, enrolled in Harvard Medical School, and then served as an intern at St. Luke's Hospital in New York, where he courted and married the head nurse. But rather than pursue a career in the United States, Wilson decided that his future lay in his hometown of Nanking, and taking his bride with him, he returned in 1935 to practice medicine at the University of Nanking Hospital.

The first two years for the Wilsons were perhaps the most idyllic of their lives. Time was marked by a slow-paced charm—dinners with other missionary couples, elegant teas and receptions at foreign embassies, parties at sprawling country villas staffed with private cooks and coolies. In the evenings he read ancient Chinese in its original text and studied under a private tutor to expand his knowledge of the language. He also took every Wednesday afternoon off to play tennis. Sometimes he and his wife would go to the lake together and have dinner on a boat, inhaling the perfumed air as they drifted through watery lanes of red lotus blossom.

War, however, shattered forever the timeless serenity the Wilsons had enjoyed in Nanking. After the Marco Polo Bridge

incident in July, the people of Nanking began to carry gas masks in the street, along with chemical solution and layers of gauze, fearing a Japanese poison-gas attack. By August 1937, when the Japanese started to bomb the capital, his wife Marjorie had boarded a gunboat with their infant daughter Elizabeth and arrived safely at Kuling. But Wilson, fearing his wife and child would starve to death if the war continued, insisted that they return to the United States. Mrs. Wilson complied with his wishes and went back to work at St. Luke's in New York while her mother cared for the baby. But there was no question that Dr. Wilson himself would stay in Nanking. "He saw this as his duty," his wife recalled, almost sixty years later. "The Chinese were his people."

No doubt to dispel loneliness that autumn, Wilson moved into the house of J. Lossing Buck, the former husband of Pearl Buck, and the house soon filled up with his friends: the surgeon Richard Brady, the United Christian missionary James McCallum, and other people who would later serve as members of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. Like Wilson, many of these men had sent their wives and children away from Nanking.

When he wasn't busy with patients, Wilson often wrote letters home to his family. Most contained gruesome descriptions of the victims of Japanese bombs, such as the girl who had crouched with her back to an explosion, only to have her buttocks ripped off. From the casualties of war he dug out a growing heap of shrapnel and bullets—enough, he wrote cynically, to open "a respectable museum" before the war was over.

Even though he knew that the Japanese had no qualms about bombing hospitals, Wilson continued to go to work. On September 25, in one of the worst air raids Nanking had ever experienced, the Japanese aimed two 1,000-pound bombs at the Central Hospital and Ministry of Health, despite the presence of a large red cross clearly painted on one of the roofs. The bombs landed only fifty feet away from a dugout where one hundred doctors and nurses were hiding.

Wilson did everything possible in the hospital to minimize the risk of attracting Japanese bombs. Heavy black curtains



were drawn over the windows to hide lit rooms from Japanese aviators. But the city crawled with rumors of spies guiding pilots to key targets with red and green lanterns at night. During one raid a stranger crept into the hospital with a red-shielded flashlight instead of a green- or black-shielded one and aroused suspicions when he tried to open a window that had been securely shut to prevent the seepage of poison gas. He raised even more eyebrows when he asked a Chinese aviator patient a number of unusual questions about the flying height and range of Chinese bombers.

As autumn drew to a close, Wilson found himself tremendously overworked. More people needed medical attention than ever before—not only civilian victims of Japanese bombs but veterans from Shanghai. There were approximately one hundred thousand wounded Chinese veterans in hospitals between Shanghai and the city of Wuhu. Trainload after trainload dumped them off at the station in Hsiakwan, the northern Nanking suburb. Some lay dying on the floor of the station, while others limped aimlessly through the capital. Soldiers who healed were returned to the front, but those who lost arms or legs, those crippled beyond hope, were simply turned loose with two-dollar compensations and instructions to go home. Home was far away for most soldiers. Few had the money or physical energy to get there. Abandoned by their leaders, stranded in the Shanghai-Nanking area, thousands of Chinese veterans—blind, lame, rotting away from wounds and infections—were reduced to begging in the streets.

As the situation worsened, the staff at the hospital shrank. Chinese doctors and nurses fled the city, joining the hundreds of thousands of Nanking residents in their westward migration. Wilson did all he could to dissuade his medical staff from leaving, insisting that under martial law they would have nothing to fear after the city fell. Ultimately, however, he was unable to convince them to stay. By the end of the first week of December there were only three doctors at the University of Nanking Hospital: Robert Wilson, C. S. Trimmer, and a Chinese physician. When Richard Brady, the only other American surgeon in the city, left Nanking because his little girl was seri-

ously ill in Kuling, Wilson was the only person left to perform the hourly amputations. "It is quite a sensation," he wrote on December 7, "to be the only surgeon in a big war-torn city."

A week later, Wilson nearly lost his life. On the afternoon of December 13, he had decided to perform a delicate operation on a patient who had suffered severe eye injury from a bomb. Wilson had to remove what was left of the eye in order to save the other one. The eyeball was halfway out when a shell landed fifty yards away from Wilson and exploded, shattering the windows and spraying the room with shrapnel. No one was killed or injured, but Wilson noted that the nurses were "naturally pretty shaky" and wanted to know whether they should continue the operation. "There was obviously nothing else to do," Wilson wrote, "but I don't think any eyes have come out that fast."

By nightfall of December 13, the Japanese had seized complete control of the ancient capital. Wilson saw Japanese flags fluttering all over town. The following day the conquering army began to take over the hospitals in the city. They broke into the main hospital of the Chinese army—located within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and run by Safety Zone members who had organized themselves as a chapter of the Red Cross—and trapped hundreds of Chinese soldiers inside. The Japanese forbade doctors to enter the hospital or send food to the wounded soldiers, who were later marched out and systematically shot. After three out of four Red Cross hospitals fell in this manner to the Japanese, the International Committee concentrated its efforts on the University of Nanking Hospital.

During the first few days of occupation, Wilson watched the Japanese soldiers loot and burn the city. He saw them rob the University of Nanking Hospital and, frustrated that he could not stop all of the thefts, mentally aimed a "swift kick" at a soldier who tried to steal a camera from a nurse. He also watched soldiers burn a heap of musical instruments in the street and wondered whether the destruction of property was a Japanese plot to compel the people of Nanking to buy Japanese goods later.

Wilson even witnessed the ransacking of his own home. Venturing to his house to survey possible damage, he caught

red-handed three Japanese soldiers in the process of looting it. They had broken into the attic, opened up a big trunk, and strewn its contents all over the floor. One of them was peering into a microscope when Wilson walked in. Upon seeing him, all three soldiers ran down the stairs and out the door. "The crowning insult was on the second floor where one had just finished depositing his calling card on the floor of the toilet within a foot of the toilet bowl," Wilson wrote. "He had covered it with a clean towel which had been left hanging in the room."

But nothing of the looting could compare to the rape and murder that he witnessed in the city. Even Wilson, now a jaded war surgeon, found the intensity of the atrocities shocking.

*December 15:* The slaughter of civilians is appalling. I could go on for pages telling of cases of rape and brutality almost beyond belief.

*December 18:* Today marks the 6th day of modern Dante's *Inferno*, written in huge letters with blood and rape. Murder by the wholesale and rape by the thousands of cases. There seems to be no stop to the ferocity, lust and savagism of the brutes. At first I tried to be pleasant to them to avoid arousing their ire, but the smile has gradually worn off and my stare is fully as cool and fishy as theirs.

*December 19:* All the food is being stolen from the poor people and they are in a state of terror-stricken, hysterical panic. When will it stop!

*Christmas Eve:* Now they tell us that there are twenty thousand soldiers still in the Zone (where they get their figures no one knows), and that they are going to hunt them out and shoot them all. That will mean every able-bodied male between the ages of 18 and 50 that is now in the city. How can they ever look anybody in the face again?

By the end of the year his letters carried a fatalistic air. "The only consolation is that it can't be worse," he wrote on Decem-

ber 30. "They can't kill as many people as there aren't any more to kill."

Frequently Wilson and the others saw the Japanese round up Chinese soldiers, shoot them, and stuff the bodies in dirt air-raid shelters that doubled as mass graves. But Wilson heard that many Chinese people were executed not because they posed any threat to the Japanese army but because their bodies served a practical purpose. After the fall of Nanking, the big trenches that the Chinese had built for tank traps were filled to the brim by the Japanese with the bodies of dead and wounded soldiers. When the Japanese failed to find enough bodies of dead soldiers so tanks could pass over them, they shot nearby residents and threw them in the trenches as well. The witness who told Wilson the story borrowed a camera so that he could take pictures to confirm his statements.

There was very little Wilson could do to prevent these murders. The Japanese soldiers he confronted often made a point of conspicuously playing with their weapons—loading and unloading them—in order to intimidate him and other foreigners. Wilson fully expected to be shot in the back at any moment.

One of the worst scenes Wilson saw in Nanking—a scene he would remember for the rest of his life—was a massive gang rape of teenage girls in the street. A group of young women between the ages of fifteen and eighteen were lined up by the Japanese and then raped in the dirt, one after another, by an entire regiment. Some hemorrhaged and died, while others killed themselves shortly afterwards.

But the scenes in the hospitals were even more horrifying than those in the streets. Wilson was mortified by the women who came to the emergency room with their bellies ripped open, by the charred and horribly disfigured men whom the Japanese tried to burn alive, and by numerous other horrors he barely had time to describe on paper. He told his wife that he would never forget the woman whose head was nearly cut off, teetering from a point on her neck. "This morning came another woman in a sad plight and with a horrible story," a hospital volunteer wrote of this woman in his diary on January 3, 1938.

She was one of the five women whom the Japanese soldiers had taken to one of their medical units—to wash their clothes by day, to be raped by night. Two of them were forced to satisfy from 15 to 20 men and the prettiest one as many as 40 each night. This one who came to us had been called off by three soldiers into an isolated place where they attempted to cut off her head. The muscles of the neck had been cut but they failed to sever the spinal cord. She feigned death but dragged herself to the hospital—another of the many to bear witness to the brutality of soldiers.

Yet in the midst of their pain and suffering, Wilson was amazed by the willpower of some of his patients. In a letter to his family dated New Year's Day 1938, he told an incredible account of survival. Chinese soldiers burned down the home of a twenty-nine-year-old woman in a tiny village south of Nanking, forcing her to head for the capital by foot with her five small children. Before nightfall a Japanese airplane dove down at them, strafing the family with machine-gun fire and sending a bullet through the mother's right eye and out her neck. She fainted in shock but awoke the next morning, lying in a pool of blood next to her crying children. Too weak to carry her youngest child, a three-month-old baby, she left it behind in an empty house. Yet she somehow found the strength to struggle on to Nanking with her four remaining children, making her way successfully to the hospital.

Wilson and other volunteers stayed in the hospital until they wavered on the verge of collapse. The International Committee could have used medical help from outside the city, but the Japanese would not permit doctors or medical volunteers to enter Nanking. So the burden of caring for the sick and administering the zone fell on this tiny beleaguered committee of no more than some twenty individuals. They worked in shifts to ensure that the hospital was guarded from the Japanese by at least one foreigner twenty-four hours a day. Some of them became so overworked that they succumbed to colds, flu, and various other illnesses. During the massacre the only other Western doctor in the city, C. S. Trimmer, struggled with a fever of 102 degrees.

The University of Nanking Hospital swiftly became another refugee camp because Wilson refused to discharge patients who had no place to go. Patients who did leave the hospital were accompanied by foreigners to ensure that they returned home safely. James McCallum acted as the hospital chauffeur, driving patients about town in unpainted, patched-up ambulances. Survivors of the massacre remember that the exhausted McCallum pressed cold towels against his face to stay awake as he drove patients home. But when even cold towels failed to keep his eyes open, McCallum resorted to chewing his tongue until it bled.

Few people in Nanking pushed themselves as hard as Wilson did in the hospital. When the massacre and rapes gradually subsided, several of the other physicians went to Shanghai every weekend to recover from the strain. But Wilson continued to operate on patients relentlessly, day and night, around the clock. His selflessness was remembered almost sixty years later by survivors who spoke of Wilson with great reverence, at least one of them discussing in detail the preparation and successful result of his operation under Wilson's hands. He operated for free, because few patients had money to pay him, but the surgeries exacted a terrible price from his own health. In the end, his family believes that only his faith as a devout Methodist, combined with his love for China, gave him the courage to survive the Rape of Nanking.

## THE LIVING GODDESS OF NANKING

Wilhelmina Vautrin (or Minnie Vautrin, as most people called her), by occupation head of the Education Department and dean of studies at Ginling Women's Arts and Science College, was one of the few Western women in the city during the first few weeks of the Nanking massacre. Years later she would be remembered not only for her courage in protecting thousands of women from Japanese soldiers but also for the diary she kept, a diary that some historians believe will eventually be recognized, much like the diary of Anne Frank, for its impor-

tance in illuminating the spirit of a single witness during a holocaust of war.

Vautrin, the daughter of a blacksmith, was fifty-one years old in 1937. Raised in the tiny farming community of Secor, Illinois, she was sent to live with neighbors when her mother died six years later. In their homes Vautrin was often treated little better than a servant or field hand, and she found herself herding cattle during the bleakest months of winter. Despite the impoverishment of her childhood, she was able to work her way through school, graduating with honors in 1912 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Tall and handsome in her youth, with long dark hair, she was a vivacious and popular woman who attracted numerous suitors. But by the time she graduated from the University of Illinois, she had made up her mind to forgo marriage. Instead, she joined the United Christian Missionary Association and moved to Hofei, a city in the Anhwei province of China, where she worked for seven years as the principal of a girls' school and learned to speak Chinese. Then Vautrin moved to Nanking, to the position she held at the time of the massacre.

Vautrin was clearly very happy in Nanking. On visits to her hometown in Illinois, she talked incessantly of China—its culture, its people, and its history. She gave her family silkworm cocoons and taught them how to cook and eat Chinese food. In her diary, she never ceased to marvel at the beauty of the Nanking landscape. An avid gardener, she planted roses and chrysanthemums at Ginling College, visiting greenhouses at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park, walking down the fragrant lanes of plum and peach trees near the Ming Tombs.

In the summer of 1937, while vacationing with friends in the seaside summer resort of Tsingtao, Vautrin heard that a Japanese soldier had disappeared a few miles south of Peking. The disappearance triggered several battles between the Chinese and Japanese in the area, prompting a friend of hers to comment darkly that the assassination of only two people in Sarajevo in 1914 had eventually culminated in the deaths of more than 11 million people.

Still, Vautrin refused to join the other Americans evacuating

Nanking, and so the American embassy lent her a new nine-foot American flag to lay flat on the center of the grassy quadrangle of Ginling College to protect the campus against Japanese pilots. The embassy staff also gave her and the other International Committee members lengths of rope to knot into ladders and told them that once the *Panay* departed with the American embassy officials, and the Chinese military slammed all the gates shut, their only hope of escape would be over the city walls.

But Vautrin hardly had time to think about running away. With most of the faculty gone from Nanking (most had abandoned their homes to flee to cities like Shanghai and Chengtu), Vautrin was now the acting head of the institution. She labored to prepare the campus for female refugees and to evacuate wounded soldiers from the area. To disguise their identities, she burned their military papers and garments in the college incinerator. Under her direction, furniture was moved into attics, safes were emptied, dorms were cleaned, and valuables were wrapped in oil paper and hidden. Meanwhile, posters, signs, and armbands for the Nanking Safety Zone were created and distributed among volunteers. Vautrin also commissioned the sewing of a second American flag, this one twenty-seven feet long, but the Chinese tailor who put it together accidentally sewed the blue field with the stars on the lower, left-hand corner instead of the upper.

By the second week of December the gates of Ginling opened for women and children. Thousands of people poured in. Refugees were passing through the city at the rate of one thousand a day. Many of them, exhausted, bewildered, and hungry, came into the Safety Zone camps with only the clothing on their backs. "From 8:30 this morning until 6 this evening, excepting for the noon meal, I have stood at the front gate while the refugees poured in," she continued. "There is terror in the faces of many of the women—last night was a terrible night in the city and many young women were taken from their homes by the Japanese soldiers."

Vautrin allowed the women and children to come in freely but implored older women to stay home to leave space for the



younger ones. Few women took her suggestion, and most begged just for a place to sit on the lawn. By the night of December 15, the population of the camps at Ginling had swelled to more than three thousand people.

The next day Japanese soldiers stormed the college. At 10:00 A.M. on December 16, more than one hundred Japanese troops burst onto the Ginling campus to inspect the buildings for hidden Chinese soldiers. They demanded that every door be opened, and if a key was not forthcoming, a Japanese soldier stood ready with an ax to break down the door by force. Vautrin's heart sank at the thought of the Japanese finding the hundreds of padded garments stored in the Geography Department office upstairs, but fortunately an attic packed with two hundred Chinese women and children diverted the Japanese soldiers' attention. (Vautrin later buried the garments to hide them from the Japanese.)

Twice that day the Japanese seized servants on campus and started to drag them away. They certainly would have been killed if Vautrin had not rescued them with cries of "No soldier—coolie!" Only later did she learn that the Japanese had trained at least six machine guns on the campus, with many more soldiers on guard outside, ready to shoot anyone who attempted to run away.

That evening Vautrin saw women being carted away in the streets and heard their desperate pleas. A truck went by with eight to ten girls, and as it passed she heard them scream, "Jiu Ming! Jiu Ming! (Save our lives!)"

The following day, December 17, 1937, was even worse. The migration of women into Ginling only intensified as Japanese soldiers flooded the city. "What a heartbreaking sight!" Vautrin wrote. "Weary women, frightened girls, trudging with children and bedding and small packages of clothes." If only someone had time to write the story of each refugee who came in, she thought—especially the stories of the girls who had blackened their faces and cut their hair. As she accommodated the stream of "wild-eyed women," she heard stories of the Japanese raping girls as young as twelve and women as elderly as sixty, or raping pregnant women at bayonet point. The harried Vautrin

spent the entire day trying to secure food for the refugees, direct Chinese men to other camps in the Safety Zone, and run to areas on campus where Japanese soldiers had been sighted.

But nothing prepared Vautrin for the encounter that awaited her that evening. Two Japanese soldiers were pulling at the door of the Central Building, demanding that Vautrin open it immediately, but when she insisted that she had no key and that no soldiers were hiding inside, a Japanese soldier slapped her in the face and also struck the Chinese man next to her. Then she saw two Japanese soldiers lead away three bound servants from the college. She followed them to the front gate, where the Japanese had forced a large group of Chinese to kneel beside the road. The Japanese demanded to speak to the master of the institution and, learning that it was Vautrin, ordered her to identify every kneeling person. One man in the party spoke up to help Vautrin, and for this he was slapped severely.

In the midst of this ordeal, three committee members drove up: the YMCA secretary George Fitch, the Nanking University sociology professor Lewis Smythe, and the Presbyterian missionary W. Plumer Mills. The soldiers forced the three men to stand in line and frisked them for pistols. Suddenly they heard screams and cries and saw the Japanese dragging women out of the side gate. It was only then that Vautrin realized that the entire interrogation was a ploy to keep the foreigners at the front gate while other Japanese soldiers searched the campus for women to rape. "Never shall I forget that scene," she wrote, remembering her rage and helplessness: "The people kneeling at side of road, Mary, Mrs. Tsen and I standing, the dried leaves rattling, the moaning of the wind, the cry of women being led out."

For the next few months, Vautrin often found herself one of the sole defenders of the refugee camps at Ginling College. Japanese soldiers constantly harassed the refugees there by rounding up men for execution or women for military brothels. Sometimes their recruitment tactics were brazen. On at least one occasion Japanese soldiers drove up to campus with a

truck and asked for girls. Most of the time, however, the kidnapping of women for rape was done covertly. Soldiers jumped over bamboo fences at night or broke open the side or back gates to seize random women in the darkness—expeditions that began to be known throughout the populace as “the lottery.”

On New Year’s Day 1938, Vautrin rescued a girl whom a soldier had dragged into a bamboo grove north of the library. On several occasions her heroism nearly cost Vautrin her life. Many of the soldiers were “fierce and unreasonable” toward her, brandishing bayonets reddened with fresh bloodstains. Vautrin wrote that “in some cases they are defiant and look at me with a dagger in their eyes, and sometimes a dagger in their hands.” One time, when she tried to stop Japanese soldiers from looting, one of them aimed a gun at her.

Sometimes in her dealings with the Japanese, Vautrin made mistakes. Just as Rabe and the other committee members had been duped by the Japanese into handing over men for execution, Vautrin appears to have been duped into delivering innocent women into the arms of Japanese soldiers. On December 24, Vautrin was summoned to her office to meet with a high Japanese military officer and an elderly Chinese interpreter, who discussed with her the Japanese army’s need for prostitutes. “The request was that they be allowed to pick out the prostitute women from our ten thousand refugees,” Vautrin later wrote of the meeting in her diary. “They said they wanted one hundred. They feel if they can start a regular licensed place for the soldiers then they will not molest innocent and decent women.”

Strangely enough, Vautrin granted the request. Perhaps she had no choice in the matter, or perhaps she actually believed that once the Japanese left with the prostitutes for their military brothel they would stop bothering the virgins and respectable matrons in the refugee camps. Whatever the reasons behind her decision, it is safe to assume that Vautrin made it under pressure. She waited while the Japanese conducted their search and after a long time they finally secured twenty-one women. How the Japanese were able to distinguish these

women as prostitutes Vautrin does not say, but she did mention that the Japanese were dissatisfied with the result because they were convinced that more prostitutes were hiding somewhere in the zone. "Group after group of girls have asked me if they will select the other seventy-nine from among the decent girls—and all I can answer is that they will not do so if it is in my power to prevent it," she wrote.

A week after the city fell, the Japanese began a systematic effort to regulate activity within the zone. The commander of the military police of the Japanese army made a proclamation, effective December 24, dictating that all civilians obtain passports (also called "good citizen's papers") from the issuing office of the Japanese army. No one was allowed to get a passport for someone else, and those without passports would not be allowed to live within the Nanking city walls. The military posted bulletins in the streets notifying people to register or face the risk of being executed.

On December 28, registration of the men began. At Ginling College they formed lines of four, received copies of forms, and marched to a house at the northeast corner of the campus where the Japanese recorded their names, ages, and occupations. Vautrin noticed that the men who arrived for registration were mainly old or maimed because most of the young men had already fled the city or been killed. Among those who showed up, more men were taken away as ex-soldiers, leaving behind old men and women who wept and kneeled before the Safety Zone leaders, begging them to secure the release of their husbands and sons. In a few cases the zone leaders were successful, but they noticed that the Japanese military officials were growing increasingly resentful of their interference.

When the turnout of men for registration disappointed the Japanese, they tried to intimidate the populace into compliance. On December 30, they announced that all who had not been registered by 2:00 P.M. the following day would be shot. "This proved to be a bluff," one missionary wrote of the incident, "but it frightened the people." The next morning huge

crowds of people dutifully appeared at the registration areas, many of whom had risen before 3:00 A.M. to ensure their place in line. The Draconian threats of the Japanese had instilled such fear that by January 14 the authorities succeeded in registering at least 160,000 people.

Then registration began for the women. At 9:00 A.M. on December 31, thousands of Chinese women gathered in front of the Central Building of Ginling College, where a Japanese military official lectured to them. Speeches were given first in Japanese, then translated into Chinese by an interpreter: "You must follow the old customs of marriage," Vautrin recalled them saying. "You must not study English or go to theatres. China and Japan must be one." The women were then marched single file in two lines through frames set up for selling rice, where they were given tickets. Vautrin observed that the Japanese soldiers seemed to get a great deal of amusement herding the women about like cattle, sometimes putting the stamp on their cheeks. The soldiers also forced the women to smile and look happy for Japanese newsmen and photographers, even though the mere prospect of registration had made some women literally ill with fear.

At times the Japanese registration of Chinese women seemed to Vautrin nothing less than a full-scale inspection of the most attractive candidates for rape. On the very first day of female registration, the Japanese scrutinized certain women in the zone and tried to take them away. They had singled out twenty girls, no doubt for prostitution, because they had curled hair or dressed too well. But all were released, Vautrin later wrote, "because a mother or some other person could vouch for them."

After registration, the Japanese tried to eliminate the zone itself. In late January the Japanese announced that they wanted everyone out of the camps and back into their homes by the end of the month. February 4 was given as the deadline for evacuation. When the deadline arrived, Japanese soldiers inspected Ginling College and ordered the remaining girls and women to leave. When Vautrin told the inspectors that they could not leave because they were from other cities or their

homes had burned down, the Japanese announced that the military police would assume the responsibility of protecting them. Vautrin was wary of these promises, and even the Chinese interpreter who came with the Japanese to deliver their messages whispered to Vautrin that he felt the young women were not safe and should continue to stay where they were.

The sheer number of refugees eventually overwhelmed Vautrin. Hundreds of women crammed themselves into verandas and covered ways head to feet, and many more women slept outside on the grass at night. The attic of Ginling's Science Hall housed more than one thousand women, and a friend of Vautrin's noted that women "slept shoulder to shoulder on the cement floor for weeks on end during the cold winter months! Each cement step in the building was the home of one person—and those steps are not more than four feet long! Some were happy to have a resting place on the chemistry lab tables, the water pipes and other paraphernalia not interfering at all."

The Rape of Nanking wore down Vautrin physically, but the mental torture she endured daily was far worse than her physical deterioration. "Oh, God, control the cruel beastliness of the soldiers in Nanking tonight . . ." she wrote in her diary. "How ashamed the women of Japan would be if they knew these tales of horror."

Under such pressure, it is remarkable that Vautrin still found the spirit to comfort others and give them a renewed sense of patriotism. When an old lady went to the Red Cross kitchen at Ginling College to fetch a bowl of rice porridge, she learned that there was no porridge left. Vautrin immediately gave her the porridge she had been eating and said to her: "Don't you people worry. Japan will fail. China will not perish." Another time, when she saw a boy wearing an armband marked with the Japanese symbol of the rising sun to ensure his safety, Vautrin scolded him and said: "You do not need to wear this rising sun emblem. You are a Chinese and your country has

not perished. You should remember the date you wear this thing, and you should never forget." Again and again, Vautrin urged the Chinese refugees on campus never to lose faith in their future. "China has not perished," she told them. "China will never perish. And Japan will definitely fail in the end."

Others could see how hard she was working. "She didn't sleep from morning till night," one Chinese survivor recalled. "She kept watching and if Japanese soldiers came . . . she would try her best to push them out and went out to their officials to pray them not to do so much evil things to the Chinese women and children." "It was said that once she was slapped several times by beastly Japanese soldiers," another wrote in his eyewitness account of the Nanking massacre. "Everyone was worried about her. Everyone tried to comfort her. She still fought for the cause of protecting Chinese women with courage and determination from beginning to end."

The work of running the zone was not only physically taxing but psychologically debilitating. Christian Kröger, a Nazi member of the International Committee, claimed that he saw so many corpses in the streets that he soon suffered nightmares about them. But in the end, under unbelievable circumstances, the zone saved lives. Here are some startling facts:

—Looting and arson made food so scarce that some Chinese refugees ate the Michaelmas daisies and goldenrod growing on the Ginling College campus or subsisted on mushrooms found in the city. Even the zone leaders went hungry from lack of meals. They not only provided free rice to the refugees through soup kitchens but delivered some of it directly to refugee compounds, because many Chinese in the zone were too scared to leave their buildings.

—Bookish and genteel, most of the zone leaders had little experience in handling a horde of rapists, murderers, and street brawlers. Yet they acted as bodyguards for even the Chinese police in the city and somehow, like warriors, found the physical energy and raw courage to throw themselves in the line of fire—wrestling Chinese men away from execution sites, knocking

Japanese soldiers off of women, even jumping in front of cannons and machine guns to prevent the Japanese from firing.

—In the process, many zone leaders came close to being shot, and some received blows or cuts from Japanese soldiers wielding bayonets and swords. For example: Charles Riggs, a University of Nanking professor of agricultural engineering, was struck by an officer when he tried to prevent him from taking away a group of Chinese civilians mistaken as soldiers. The infuriated Japanese officer “threatened Riggs with his sword three times and finally hit him hard over the heart twice with his fist.” A Japanese soldier also threatened Professor Miner Searle Bates with a pistol. Another soldier pulled a gun on Robert Wilson when he tried to kick out of the hospital a soldier who had crawled into bed with three girls. Still another soldier fired a rifle at James McCallum and C. S. Trimmer but missed. When Miner Searle Bates visited the headquarters of the Japanese military police to learn the fate of a University Middle School student who had been tied up and carried off by soldiers, the Japanese shoved Bates down a flight of stairs. Even the swastikas the Nazis carried about like amulets occasionally failed to protect them from assault. On December 22, John Rabe wrote that Christian Kröger and another German named Hatz were attacked when they tried to save a Chinese man who had been wounded in the throat by a drunken Japanese soldier. Hatz defended himself with a chair, but Kröger apparently ended up being tied and beaten.

—The zone eventually accommodated some 200,000–300,000 refugees—almost half the Chinese population left in the city.

The last is a chilling statistic when placed in the context of later studies of the Nanking massacre. Half the original inhabitants of Nanking left before the massacre. About half of those who stayed (350,000 people out of the 600,000–700,000 Chinese refugees, native residents, and soldiers in the city when it fell) were killed.

If half of the population of Nanking fled into the Safety Zone during the worst of the massacre, then the other half—almost everyone who did not make it to the zone—probably died at the hands of the Japanese.