

## CHAPTER I

**A**LITTLE more than three quarters of a century ago, the Western Powers, among them America, knocked upon the doors of Japan and invited her to leave her cloistered and medieval life as an agricultural nation, open her ports to foreign influence and join them in the exciting and lucrative game of world trade. Reluctantly, even timidly, Japan consented. But with her consent Japan did not go half way about the matter. She sent her young men to America and to Europe to be educated. In time she came to play the game of the Western Powers so well that she became a commercial rival to her new found and patronizing friends. Immediately, their manner changed. They no longer patted her on the back and said she was a good child. They turned against her. They ganged up against her. By adroit and subtle propaganda, by discrimination against her goods and her people they not only began to blast her good name over the world, make her hated among many peoples but slowly and gradually and most surely these same Western Powers who had coaxed her from seclusion and splendid isolation began to close the markets of the world to her manufactured goods.

## 2 BEHIND THE NEWS IN CHINA

Japan staggered under the blow. But it was too late for her to turn back. She had been an agricultural nation. She had become an industrial nation. Some seventy millions of her people lived in a country the size of California. But 15 per cent of that land was arable. And 85 per cent of the people lived on that 15 per cent of arable land. Japan had abandoned the old and taken on the new. The standard of living of her people had been raised. In all good faith she had accepted the invitation of the Western Powers to come out and play the game with them. Now she realized she had been duped by false friends.

Just so long as Japan had been a harmless, backward nation in the eyes of the western world she was popular among these foreign peoples and their governments. But when she learned too quickly, when she became too adept at their own play then they turned against her.

Japan had for an object lesson China. Great, lumbering China, her neighbor, with 450,000,000 people, unable to stand upon their own feet; China steeped in poverty and misery, her rich lands plundered and pillaged by her war lords and drained by the same Western Powers that had crossed the world and invited Japan to join them in international trade.

China, as an Asiatic people, of long acquaintance, Japan understood; China, the glories of her past now the ashes of empire and the embers of re-

public, rotting of her own follies and the sins and greed of her own leaders. Japan had made the most of her contact with the outside world. China had not. Japan had become a rival to the Western Powers. China had become their slave. Therefore, Japan found herself in the role of a nation without a friend and China, her massacres and pillages of foreigners forgotten, was suddenly held up as a nation and people deserving sympathy and support.

Step by step, slowly, surely, like the stealthy coiling of a boa constrictor about its victim's body, the Western Powers, one of them particularly with vast interests in China, began to shut off the life blood of trade with Japan over the world, in Europe, then Egypt, India, finally America. Japan in so many words was told to go back on her islands and starve, to abandon her world industrial program into which she had been enticed by honeyed words and return to simple and frugal agricultural life. And every year, that population of 70,000,000 people in a country the size of California, 2,774 of them packed into every square mile of arable land, faced a birthrate of a million a year. What was she to do? Where was she to go? Her people cried for work, for bread, for the continuation of the government's ambitious plans put into effect for the education of their children; her people asked the better and higher standard of living which the new era was granting them, with peoples of other nations in other parts of

#### 4 BEHIND THE NEWS IN CHINA

the world, yet in the taking of her share in international trade Japan had also been giving, particularly to America, Japan was buying from the United States five times what she was selling.

With alarm Japan noted the insidious propaganda sent abroad against her. But one market remained to keep her from starving. That was North China. There were seventy millions of people in North China. They needed the things Japan could give them. They had the raw materials Japan needed in exchange. At least if jealous trade rivals of Europe shunned her, Japan felt she had the right and the opportunity of doing business with her next door neighbor of Asia. She knew too well the sloth and weakness of the Chinese masses at large and the treachery and greed of the Chinese war lords, but she had driven the war lords and their hired gangster armies out of Manchuria and made of that country a territory so envied by the North Chinese that thousands of them sought yearly to cross the borders of Manchoukuo and work there for higher wages and with a greater degree of comfort and security. Before Manchuria became Manchoukuo in that country of 30,000,000 people, 300,000 bandits roamed at large, pillaging and slaying with Chinese war lords. "The Young Marshal" and his lieutenants, riding high in the saddle as their leaders. Now the war lords—"The Young Marshal" among them—were gone, and in that new empire there

were less than 30,000 bandits, there were schools and factories and railroads and highways building in place of ruined villages and lands abandoned and untilled.

Japan felt that if she could bring order out of chaos in Manchuria in less than three years, that she could at least, under anything like a strong and sane Chinese government do business in North China. She had high hopes in Chiang Kai-shek. True Chiang Kai-shek had been and was a war lord and to understand the China picture you must know that the provinces of China have always been ruled by war lords, even under the so-called republic. Empire and "republic" had alike been cruel and unjust to the masses. There were four hundred and fifty million Chinese, the people of one province did not understand the dialect of the people of another, the North hated the South, the South hated the North. Each province was run by a war lord; that war lord was once a bandit who became a soldier, who became in turn a general with a private army of his own; each war lord exacted tribute from the lowliest coolie, the private armies were maintained at crushing expense to the people. Then came Chiang Kai-shek, at first little better, little worse than the rest of his clan, but he married into the rich Soongs and became himself immensely wealthy and with this money he gradually built himself a powerful private army and whipped or bought other war lords

## 6 BEHIND THE NEWS IN CHINA

into line, establishing a central government, forming something of a stable government out of the ruin of scattered lordships.

Because he and his wife and her family were rich, Chiang Kai-shek would have nothing to do with the Moscow inspired Communists and their armies in his country. He outdid Stalin in his purges. His soldiers executed thousands. He won, through blood, dominance and control over China. Barring his past, and the fact that he was suspected with other war lords of harboring an immense opium trade, his henchmen beheading addicts with one hand on one day and selling the drug with the other on another day, barring these things Japan hoped that Chiang Kai-shek, who fought Communism, would be able to maintain something like order in a chaotic country given to many bloody surprises for foreigners and natives alike.

Chiang Kai-shek and his legions had hated foreigners and his armies had been known to march and kill and rape among them, crimes which like others have since been carefully concealed and kept under cover by both Chiang and his recent western allies. It is good to know, however, just what has been taking place behind the scenes prior to the Marco Polo Bridge incident near Peking and the attendant undeclared war.

The British had Hong Kong by the throat and the Western Powers at large sat on Shanghai.

Peking which had been the capital of the old empire was a constant reminder of the Manchu princes whose grafting marshals the thieving war lords of the revolution had succeeded. Hong Kong was far away and near Canton and something for the Cantonese to worry about at the moment. Chiang Kai-shek first gave his war lords free reign in looting the priceless treasures of the Forbidden City of Peking until under the fast crumbling walls of the ancient and mysterious city that had been the abode of the Chinese emperors, but little more than the bicycle and toys of the one time "Boy Emperor" of China and a few musty thrones remained. The job of cleaning up the royal palaces in the Forbidden City had been neatly started by "The Christian General" and other early sons of the Sun Yat Sen revolution. Chiang, in reality, put the finishing touches on it.

The real stroke in sounding the death knell of Peking and its glories was the building of the new Nanking, half way between Peking and Shanghai, and the firm invitation to the foreign powers to move their embassies from Peking to Nanking. The comparison between Nanking and Peking for those who have not been there is Reno against Washington; that and the climate of Chicago, winter and summer, thrown up against the balm of a San Francisco September day. Chiang's suggestion that they move from Peking to Nanking did not meet with any enthusiastic response from the em-

## 8 BEHIND THE NEWS IN CHINA

bassies although Uncle Sam led off with a residence in Nanking which now is of little use.

With Peking dying Chiang turned his attention to Shanghai, the killing of Peking and Shanghai giving Nanking, according to his plans, full sway. He was, to be sure, trying to unite China under a Central government, if it was his own private affair, but Shanghai proved a harder nut to crack. Here the Western Powers were grouped into an international settlement, here they maintained their own military and here the foreigner within the confines of that settlement had his own council and laws and here were conducted the banking houses and commercial institutions, safe from marauding war lords and bandits. Chiang wanted the banking and the business done in Nanking. He lavished public moneys, wrung from the poor coolies, on stately public buildings and stadiums with the prodigal hand of a Roman Emperor, but even his generals would not bank in Nanking. They kept their moneys, their loot in Shanghai if they did not send it out of the country. In this, Chiang did likewise for it is common report that he has something far in excess of eighty millions of dollars stored away safely in London for the day when the game might be up in China. The life of a war lord at best is and has been a hazardous thing in China.

Shanghai stood its ground and did not budge and Chiang openly nursed a deep grudge against



the metropolis of the Orient, the Chicago of China. Japan, like the other Western Powers, had big stakes in China and banked through Shanghai, but nevertheless it was willing to swallow much if Chiang, despite his faults, could bring something of unity and order out of the perpetual chaos by which China down through the centuries had been plagued.

Meanwhile Japan, with the Western Powers lined up against her in the trade marts of the world, began to feel in North China not only their influence against her with the Chinese government itself, for they began to craftily work upon Chiang Kai-shek against Japan, but to face a new peril.

This peril came from Soviet Russia. The Western nations had economic designs on China, especially one power among them, with its great interests in China. Soviet Russia had political designs. Little has been said of the part the Soviets have played in the Far East drama yet in reality, as I shall show, Moscow lighted the fires of war between Japan and China as surely as she set Spain ablaze and turned Mexico Communistic.

For several years the Soviet had been trying to get a foothold in China. It had succeeded to a considerable degree. In Chun teh, one time opium addict; in Mao Tze-tung, brains of the Chinese Communists, and other leaders the Soviets built up a Red foe against Chiang Kai-shek which Japan, watching zealously, hoped Chiang would defeat.

## 10 BEHIND THE NEWS IN CHINA

Chiang, to his military credit, did, but the seed was still there, the broken armies scattered in far flung provinces, encouraged by Russia, waiting for the time to strike again. Meanwhile, out of the Red colleges of propaganda in Moscow the Russians were turning from twelve to fifteen hundred young Chinese Reds a year and sending them back to their homeland to move among the masses and preach the doctrine of Communism and the program of world revolution of the Third Internationale.

These agents of the Reds deliberately began to set the starving millions of China on fire against every man who had anything against Chiang Kai-shek and his war lord government at Nanking, against every foreigner. They made rash promises of confiscated riches and of easy lives and of much food, for every starved coolie who would take up a knife and gun and join them on "The Day." Chiang, alarmed, seized desperately on the idea of uniting China with him by a program of "hate Japan" and turning the public mind from the rich and himself. He was secretly encouraged in this by some of the Western Powers. And he was even joined by the China Reds. Japan found herself now faced with a nationwide program over China against her, linked with the Western Powers crusade abroad. Chiang, whom Japan, and even some of the westerners, looked on to bring order out of chaos in China, had joined Nippon's foes. Still she

held her peace though far and wide the campaign of "hate Japan" bore fruit in attacks and insults and even periodic slaying of her nationals.

Soviet Russia, though, and her China Red aides were not satisfied. As long as Chiang maintained his policy against the Communists their progress was blocked. The Soviet, covertly, through its China Red agents, tried to incite Chiang further by having him declare war on Japan. But Chiang was not ready for that yet though with the destruction of the Manchoukuo empire and the restoration of rich provinces under an old Manchuria in mind he no doubt harbored thought of eventual war with Nippon.

The new Manchoukuo was a constant eye sore and a thorn in the side to Chiang Kai-shek and the China war lords in his camp, as well as to the China Reds and the Russian Bolshevik. For Manchoukuo, from an impoverished Manchuria, had taken on the status of a happy and prosperous empire. This, despite world-wide propaganda to the effect that Japan was oppressing the Manchurians under a puppet government. Under Japan domination, no doubt, this Manchoukuo empire was, but it was prospering under it and the contrast between clean and busy cities and villages and well ordered life and modern railroads in Manchoukuo to the misery and poverty and disorder in China proper, cast reflection on not only the Nanking

## 12 BEHIND THE NEWS IN CHINA

government but the Soviet in Russia as well whose own house was far from in order.

It was then that an incident happened at Sian that had more bearing on the outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China than the Marco Polo bridge affair outside of Peking, generally credited with having started the undeclared war. The truth of it has never been told. That is, in print. But the knowledge of it is common among those who have had the opportunity of looking behind the scenes.