

## CHAPTER III

**T**HE war lords of China are a selfish lot. They think only of themselves and not of their country. They owe their power and position alone to the fact that they have armies of their own to hold it. And each one knew that if he went out with his private army against the Japanese to do battle and was defeated that he would no longer be a war lord. So the war lords stalled, particularly among them the boss war lord of them all, Chiang Kai-shek, who treasured and counted his own some half million German trained soldiers, knew that if he lost them he would lose himself. Chiang Kai-shek here began a policy which he pursued to the end, that of picking the war lords among his aides whom he did not fully trust and who were most likely to turn against him and sending them out to fight the Japanese.

At the same time, he turned to his father confessors in things military, the hard boiled German military advisers, who had built him his war machine and who were in the act of building him another one. These German generals were not idealists. They were practical men of long experience. They knew more about war than any Chinese

war lord. Now they sat in judgment and command at this crisis, trying to save the day they had attempted to put off. In the first place, they were disgusted. In the past, in many instances, their advice had not been followed and they could not hope that it would be followed entirely again.

Here, in brief, is what they told the Generalissimo to do. "Bring about foreign intervention—you cannot win alone—Russia is out at present—may and must help with supplies—depend also on England—but meanwhile get some other power to intervene—preferably America—the Americans are always good at that sort of thing."

It did not look hard to do. Sympathy at the start was with the Chinese. The Japanese were invaders. They were aggressors. They wanted to steal China, expand their empire. Once ruling China, they would organize the Chinese and conquer the world. This is what the high geared propaganda agencies of Moscow and London sent out. These agencies had been making mince meat of the Japanese for two years. Now they turned with gusto to a new task, a mightier job that must be done quickly, that must turn the world against Japan and pave the way for intervention, for perhaps American intervention, America being good at "saving the world for democracy." England was genuinely alarmed and outdid the Russians in firing up public opinion against Japan, especially in America.

Chiang, with the counsel of the German military advisers ringing in his ears to bring about intervention, looked upon Shanghai. Here, in the International Settlement, were foreigners, foreign banks and business houses, foreign homes. What simpler than to start fireworks there? The city was being flooded with Japanese civilian refugees. Japanese sailors and marines were busy landing them on their ships and getting them out of the country. Fighting in Shanghai would bring Japanese shells eventually into the foreign zones and foreigners slain would mean foreign intervention and a powerful ally for China against Japan. The fighting might also destroy Shanghai itself, send it into oblivion with Peking.

The German military advisers were for this but they advised Chiang against sending any of his own private army into Shanghai or of prolonging for any length of time the fighting there. "Strike and run," they said. "Strike and fight before the Japanese army comes in. Confine your fighting to the Japanese sailors and marines, but when the army comes, run, for if you don't you will lose the cream of your men."

"But I will lose face if I retreat," wailed Chiang in his high nasal tone. "Better 'lose face' than your men," growled the German military. The stage was set to bring about intervention in Shanghai.

The job was cleverly and craftily done. It fooled the world, particularly America, and it nearly suc-

ceeded. That it did not succeed in bringing on intervention is regarded by many foreigners on the scene as nothing short of a miracle. But in the doing, Chiang Kai-shek, by not strictly following the advice of his German military officers, nearly lost his beloved iron brigades. He held them too long on the job, he sacrificed his own troops to save face.

To begin with, Chiang Kai-shek did not boldly send his army into Shanghai with flags flying and bands playing. In the first place that would have been a violation of a treaty held with the foreign powers that no Chinese armed forces are allowed within the foreign zone. Chinese armies have long had a reputation for murder and rape among the innocents of both their own and foreign people to keep them strictly out of harm's way.

Chiang Kai-shek slipped more than a hundred thousand of his picked men into the congested areas of Shanghai—not in uniform but disguised as coolies, their arms concealed. They mingled with the coolie millions and waited for the word. Meanwhile, the Japanese had ships in port and sailors and marines ashore bustling Japanese civilian refugees from the interior aboard. Fighting was then going on outside of Peking. There were some 2000 of these Japanese sailors and marines ashore and available on their ships in port. Chiang Kai-shek struck. His blow was the simple killing of two Japanese officers. The Japanese sent a shore

party for the protection of their nationals and their interests. That was the signal. The 100,000 picked men from Nanking attacked. The Japanese found themselves suddenly confronted—2000 against 100,000, their backs to the Whangpoo, threatened with annihilation.

The battle began. But before the first shots were fired, the Moscow and European propaganda agencies, the Chinese press agents were at work.

The world was told that a united and an aroused China faced the invader. As the fighting began and the handful of Japanese strove desperately to keep from being driven into the river against the overwhelming force of Chinese regulars from Nanking, the world was told from Moscow to London that the Japanese had found a new Chinese soldier who could give as good as he could take. To their astonishment, the Japanese learned that whole districts had been secretly fortified and that the tens of thousands of trained and superbly equipped soldiers they were facing had laid a trap for them. For seven days and nights with little food, with scant ammunition at times, the Japanese sailors and marines held their foe, many times their number, in check. Some day in the future, when the history of this conflict is written, when military history is recorded, the stand made by those few thousands of Japanese for a week against great odds will go down with the Light Brigade and other famous regiments.

Yet as the fighting continued through that bloody week and against those great odds, the press of the world, the American press leading them, reviled and ridiculed the Japanese. At the same time, certain foreign nations, trade rivals of Japan, yearning for her destruction, began to aid the Chinese soldiers with provisions and with arms. The Japanese army came hurrying into the fight and the battle of Shanghai was on in earnest. Chiang Kai-shek sent more divisions into Shanghai. The Germans at Nanking stormed and raged and protested. "No more, no more, get your men out now, withdraw, retreat, you are under the Japan guns, you are where the military of Nippon want your best now."

The Japanese had got the range. They had brought in their re-enforcements. They were ready now to battle on more equal terms, although always in the China fighting the Chinese have outnumbered them ten and twenty to one. In a desperate effort to bring on intervention, the Chinese again and again contrived to draw the Japanese fire so that it would strike in the International Settlement. Their aviators on the first days even went so far as to drop bombs on the Cathay and the Palace Hotels slaying hundreds of their own civilians. They claimed later this was a mistake but many who were on the ground believe that the bombing of those hotels and the likewise bloody bombings of King Edward VII Avenue and other

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congested centers were done deliberately to bring on intervention.

In their desperation to force the hand of some foreign powers, the Chiang Kai-shek forces flagrantly raised the flags of other nations over their own barricades, buildings from which they fought, carried them over their autos. For a time the trick worked and the Japanese at cost of men avoided firing on these places with foreign flags but finally when the truth was known the Nippon aviators and soldiers bombed and shot through these flag protected Chinese fortifications. Mistakes were made as the Chinese wanted them to be made and Tokyo time and again found itself in hot water. But somehow Nippon escaped intervention although the peril constantly lurked over her.

During those long weeks of bloodshed, the miserable Chinese coolies and their families herded like sheep in buildings which their own soldiers used to fire from and they died by the hundreds with the troops. No apparent effort was made by Chiang Kai-shek or his war lords to save or to protect these people, to evacuate them. When a building filled with them was wanted as a barricade, the Nanking troops simply moved in and started firing.

The press of the world, inspired by Red propagandists, howled with glee as the fighting went on, heralding the failure of the Japanese to drive the

Chinese soldiers out of Shanghai as a sign that China "could fight and would fight."

I talked with Japanese commanders and what they told me coincided with what I know the German military advisers were telling Chiang Kai-shek at Nanking. One of these generals of the high Japanese command said to me:

"I am satisfied to remain right where we are. We have Chiang Kai-shek right under our guns. It saves us a lot of trouble. They started this thing, now, as you Americans say, 'let them finish it.'" Every day, thereafter, Japan took her toll of the flower of Chiang Kai-shek's army and every day the German military advisers at Nanking went to Chiang Kai-shek and told the Generalissimo another nail was being driven into his political coffin and begged him to get out of Shanghai. "My face, my face," Chiang Kai-shek would cry. "I will lose face before the world. Look at the marvelous publicity in the foreign press we are getting out of this and the chance for intervention."

But the German advisory command had no use for publicity when it ate into the very vitals of the war machine it had been building for Chiang Kai-shek for years. You who were at home then read your papers and were told that a new and a united China was facing Japan. But as a matter of fact Chiang Kai-shek was sacrificing his own men to save "face" and the people at large in China, and particularly in Shanghai, were praying to their



Gods for the boss war lord to get out of Shanghai and leave them to their peace.

The propaganda and publicity mills of Moscow and Nanking were grinding happily and most effectively. There were "do and die battalions," "suicide brigades," catch phrase groups pleasing to a news story, but in reality meaning nothing for the "do and die" battalions and the "suicide brigades" were no sooner put in a tight place than they quit and ran. However, others were erected in the publicity stories to take their places and even after the Chinese armies quit Shanghai, Chiang Kai-shek took up the cry and before abandoning each strategic center, boldly proclaimed to the world that he would make his "last stand there." It became a joking remark among foreigners in China that "The Generalissimo was not making his 'last stand' again, but 'his last run.' "

This continual breaking of his word, this constant retreat also weakened him with the people at large and began steadily to thin his following among them. No man can remain a national hero long who is continually running away. Not that Chiang Kai-shek really ever was a national hero—too many, even among the miserable and poor, reckoned his great wealth against his proclamations of new lives for the people and governmental reform. Abroad, however, Chiang still retained caste and the deeper his reverses the greater sympathy

was aroused for him and his wife and what the world thought were "his people."

As the armies of the Generalissimo and the war lords fell back under the blows of the Japanese, Chiang strengthened his publicity forces and these joined with Moscow and certain European powers, turned every retirement into a move of strategy, every defeat into a heroic gesture and while feeding the press with stories of victories which though later proved untrue, at the time had the virtue of offsetting the real Japanese successes. The Nanking government up to and even after the fall of that city was faced with the necessity of keeping up its credit in Europe and America for the purchase of munitions of war. Chiang and his wife or her family, enormously rich as they were, did not spend from their own fortunes, but credits abroad were established by lavish concessions signed and sold away which could be good for collection only if Chiang could drive the Japanese armies out of China.

Dr. Kung, Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law, and Minister of Finance, told me at dinner in his palace before he went to Europe to establish credits and buy war material, that China already had the sympathy of the world and that she "would beat Japan with it." It was while Dr. Kung was in Europe, signing away concessions with a lavish hand, that if Chiang had won would have impoverished the Chinese people still further for many generations,

that the publicity mills ground swiftly with monumental lies of "Chinese successes" and "Japanese reverses," all swallowed by the gullible foreign public, even its bankers. As Dr. Kung was striking his pen to these rich pledges of his homeland that must be borne by the coolie and his children and the Chinese troops were scattering like partridges before the Japanese drives, stories inspired by the propaganda mills would flash over the world and into the headlines of the papers of many nations that "China was winning."

Coupled with these stories of Chinese victories were others which put the Japanese in the light of mad barbarians and which cleverly concealed the wild and bloody excesses of the Cathay soldiery. Headlines of American papers especially shrieked of Japanese bombings of innocents with no mention or intimation of the fact that the Chinese war lords in their desperation not only to bring about intervention of some foreign power but to inflame the Chinese coolies against the Japanese, would dig their divisions into the heart of congested civilian areas and mount their guns in the very shadow of foreign properties while at the same time flying flags of other nations over their battlements. Time and again the Japanese Commanders would beg these Chinese war lords to shift their scene of battle from the thickly populated cities and towns or at least evacuate them if they chose to use their flimsy structures for protection. But the Chinese war lords

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and their soldiery not only refused to accede to these humanitarian pleas of the Japanese commanders but actually and without warning to the poor Chinese civilians used bodies and hovels as shields and baits to the enemy.