

CHAPTER IV

NOW the press agency of Chiang, fighting with printer's ink if not with men and guns, scored still another coup that entranced a naïve America and world at large. The thing took well in headlines and news copy—"a scorched earth policy." Chiang, the press agents said, to turn back "the invader" was "destroying everything behind him." This was something of an ironic jest for the private armies of the China war lords have always adhered to that policy. If they did not kill and rob the foreigner when retreating they did their own people until the people through long association can almost be said to have gotten used to it.

This "scorched earth" policy was regarded by the simplest and sanest commuter in America and elsewhere as a noble thing done in defense of one's own country and people and in stern and sacrificing protest to a cruel invader. It was followed by the "drowned earth" policy when Chiang's officers opened the dykes of the Yellow River and drowned tens of thousands of Chinese men, women and children to stop a Japanese army about to wipe the fleeing Chinese soldiers off the map. They opened

those dykes to save their own necks and their own fortunes and they thought not a whit of the poor devils of their own blood who were dying in consequence. If any other government had done that it would have been howled into oblivion by the world at large, but the publicity department of the Generalissimo had so adequately paved the way that even this was looked on by many as a heroic sacrifice to patriotism. If these amiable souls at home could have heard the cries and curses of the wretched Chinese farmers and their women and children against the fleeing troops of Chiang Kai-shek, if they could have seen them raise their fists and shake them in the direction of Chiang and his armies and call down the curses of hell upon them, they might have looked on the matter a little differently. But all they saw of China and its "drowned earth" was what they read in subtle and clever propaganda released down through the months by Chiang's highly paid penmen and they solemnly said amen to an act that will smell to high Heaven in history.

Despite the publicity build up on the part of Chiang Kai-shek after the war had gone on for a year to justify his "scorched" and "drowned earth" policy, news of the excesses of the Chinese troops under his command began to dribble through the censors and reach the outside world. The fierce and unbridled looting by Chinese soldiery of their own cities and towns "got out" and necessitated

some kind of propaganda to counteract its effect on the peoples of other nations. The fact that the China soldiery were pillaging their own was beginning to react upon Chiang and his war lords.

As a consequence, the correspondents with the Chinese armies were fed with data to the effect that "stern measures" were being taken by the Generalissimo and his war lords to prevent the looting of cities and villages in his control by "irresponsible and irregular soldiery." The blame was laid on the former Manchurian divisions of "The Young Marshal," Chang Hsueh-liang, whom the Japanese ran out of Manchuria where like his late father whom he succeeded, he had been running things with a high hand, robbing and slaying at will. This was the same Young Marshal, who turned "Red" and was selected by Moscow and the China Reds for the job of kidnaping Chiang Kai-shek at Sian when the latter was made to promise at the saving of his life that he would turn his Central Nanking Government, Soviet, and make war on Japan. For this act, it will be remembered, "The Young Marshal" in good Bolshevik form demanded to be punished by Chiang when the Generalissimo returned to his fold but instead was given a soft berth and command of his army again.

It is interesting to note how Chiang and his generals went about the business of clearing their skirts of these ugly rumors of looting Chinese cities and villages by their troops. The Chicago

Daily News, under August 25, 1938, headlines a dispatch from Chengchow, China, then under Chiang control, and of course censorship, as follows:

“SHELLS, FLOODS AND LOOTING DO HAVOC IN CHINA. SOME DEFENSE FORCES ARE BUSIER WITH ROB-BING THAN FIGHTING.”

The dispatch, signed by A. T. Steele, goes on to say in part:

“War and high water have left terrible scars on this densely populated Yellow River plain. Hundreds of square miles of countryside have been obliterated by flood waters. Here in Chengchow, once prosperous city of 200,000, whole blocks have been leveled by Japanese bombs.

“Equally depressing is the spectacle of hundreds of looted shops and homes stripped bare by irresponsible Chinese soldiery.”

While going on to comment at this time that the Chinese armies have shown marked restraint in contrast to the Japanese armies, a nice boost far from merited, the dispatch, passing the Chiang censor is allowed to say: “But certain of the irregular Chinese armies have proved exceptions to the rule. There is no argument as to which among the Chinese armies ranks lowest in the list. That doubtful distinction belongs unquestionably to the so-called Northeastern Army, made up chiefly of troops driven out of Manchuria (by the Japanese)

after the 'incident of 1931'. Their commander, the deposed Manchurian war lord, Chang Hsueh-liang, has been in technical custody—called 'soft custody' by the Chinese—since the kidnaping of Gen. Chiang Kai-shek at Sian."

The "soft custody" by the way embraced the complete freedom of "The Young Marshal" and his position at the side and in the counsel of Chiang with a whole division of his private army. The dispatch is further significant in that Chang Hsueh-liang is about to be made "the goat" of not only the Chinese army lootings but the loss of Shanghai and northern Shantung and the battles on the Lunghai railway, in all of which Chiang Kai-shek's troops figured prominently. This blaming of his reverses on his aides had so far saved Chiang Kai-shek from mounting criticism of his generalship against the Japanese and it was evidently deemed necessary by the Chengchow censors to give the Generalissimo a healthy alibi before not only the Chinese people but the world.

With the cunning of Cathay, Chiang Kai-shek never gave up a town before the Japanese until he first, before its fall, got out himself and then left some general against whom he nursed secret fear or grudge behind to bear the stigma of its loss. Now note our Chengchow censor allows this to go through to America:

"The Northwestern divisions failed in Manchuria, failed at Shanghai, failed in northern Shan-

tung and have now flopped again in the fighting on the Lunghai Railway. In each case they displayed much greater enthusiasm for looting than for fighting.

“Here in Chengchow, with the Japanese in hot pursuit only a few miles away, one of the Manchurian divisions reverted to type. It went on a rampage and gave the city a thorough working over in the best traditions of Manchurian banditry. Just when it seemed that the Japanese were about to occupy Chengchow, the dike of the Yellow River was breached (by the Chinese soldiers) and a torrent of turbid water cut across the path of the advancing (Japanese) army. Chengchow was safe and the visiting Chinese soldiers were able to give the business of looting their undivided attention. This went on for five days. . . . The frightened people of Chengchow, who fled at the approach of the Japanese, are trickling back to their bombed and looted homes.”

The article does not state what the reaction of the people of Chengchow was to the looting by their own soldiery or whether the people did not feel that they would be far better off under Japanese military policing of their city than in the company of the free booter soldiery under Chiang Kai-shek.

It is left to the reader to judge also whether the people of Manchuria are not better off under the government Japan has assisted to establish there

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than at the hands of the type of soldiers whom Japan drove out of that country and who are now engaged in pillaging in China.

This dispatch is quoted at length because it is seldom that the Chiang forces have let slip so much in damaging testimony to their conduct of affairs in China. They have been very careful and quite cautious and unusually skillful to the point where for nearly two years nothing really against them or showing their true picture has been printed in the foreign press. The result of course was that the average person outside of China and knowing nothing of China was given the impression that the men Japan was fighting were great patriots and leaders.

The dispatch does show, however, that the public relations bureau of Chiang Kai-shek was living up to its standard of being two jumps ahead of events and of laying down the proper barrage to off-set what was undoubtedly coming up, and would be damaging to them if not counteracted.

A striking instance of this is the airplane raid made by a Chinese ship on Japan. I was in China then and I saw it worked with infinite cleverness.

Suchow was about to fall, Shanghai had. Suchow's fall, coming so soon on top of Shanghai's, would have a disastrous effect on not only the morale of the people in China whom Chiang Kai-shek sought to win to his side, but on the waning government's credit abroad for munitions of war.

Dr. Kung had lately returned from Europe after painstakingly establishing these credits. Shanghai's loss had given some of the European bankers the jitters and it was only by the most encouraging kind of news sent out of Chinese "victories" and "Japanese disasters" that the wily Chiang Kai-shek, Dr. Kung and others had kept the good angels of their cause in the state of mind Dr. Kung had left them.

As the Japanese closed in on Suchow and that city's fall was but a matter of a few days, a hurried conference was called by Chiang Kai-shek and his propagandists. Something had to be done to offset the loss of Suchow. What? An idea was forthcoming. Just whose I do not know. But it was there, as big as life, and a brilliant one. Some credit it to Madame Chiang Kai-shek who has shown a gift for that sort of thing.

Something startling, something electrifying, something smashing must push the fall of Suchow to the Japanese out of the headlines and off the front page and give the world the impression that China was not being beaten but was coming back and fighting Japan off its feet or at least giving Japan as good as she was handing.

That something—what better?—would be a Chinese airplane raid of Japan. The Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek had the world weeping over Japan air raids of cities and towns held by them. True they could have prevented

these raids or the loss of civilian life attendant on them by getting their troops and munition plants out of them or at least forcing civilian evacuation of these cities and towns, but the Japan raids nevertheless had made great propaganda capital for the Generalissimo and his government.

What better than to retaliate—to raid Japan? But that had been talked over many times before. No plane, with the weight of bombs, could escape the Japanese vigil, not even the Russian flyers who had succeeded the American and European flying soldiers of fortune. With the weight of bombs the plane would be forced to fly low enough to be seen. But why not without bombs? Without bombs, without weight, without weight a chance to fly high, thousands of feet, twelve, fifteen thousand feet above the clouds. Then Japan and what? Pamphlets, of course, a message to the people of Japan. It would serve three purposes—make the front page and headlines and push Suchow's fall inside the paper and into insignificance, give the world, the Christian world in particular, the impression that the Chinese war lords were a merciful lot and above the matter of dropping real explosives on cities and towns where the innocent would die; thirdly, throw a scare into the Japanese people.

It was then decided to send one plane, not two or three, or half a dozen planes, but one plane, and to tell the world, when the single plane came back,

if it did come back, that six of them had made the raid.

Accordingly, a proclamation to the people of Japan was secretly printed, and timing nicely the approach of the fall of Suchow, a lone plane set forth for Japan, flying high in the sky and above the clouds because it was not weighted with bombs. Anxiously the Chiang Kai-shek group awaited its return. The plane managed to fly high enough to elude the vigilance of the Japanese. It did not reach Japan proper. It did manage to reach the southernmost tip of Japan and to descend to the top of a lonely mountain and there the pamphlets were dropped and the lone raider returned safely.

The moment this plane landed—and it returned none too soon—the Chiang Kai-shek propagandists flashed the news to the world, but gilded it fancifully for its better effect. The press men were told six Chinese planes had raided deep into Japan, six Chinese planes loaded with bombs, reached Japan proper, flying low over Osaka, the great industrial city of Japan, the Chicago of Nippon, frightening the Japanese military and civilians alike almost to death, but—these six planes—in reality but one—had dropped not bombs—the lone plane carried no bombs actually—but pamphlets, tender, appealing messages to the “Japanese people” from the “Chinese people.” Suchow fell, crashed to the Japanese, but the Chiang Kai-shek propagandists had beaten Suchow’s fall to the

punch. Abroad, in America particularly, the headlines of the daily press screamed in black ink—"China Planes Raid Japan, etc." And Suchow, the strategic city of Suchow, its fall militarily sealing the doom of Chiang Kai-shek and his government, dropped inside the papers, was buried amid un consequential news, was read by not one tenth of the people who read the China plane raid of Japan.

The Japanese didn't know they had been "raided by a Chinese plane" until they read about it in the foreign papers. Several days later Japanese farmers came across the pamphlets on the lonely mountainside at the southern tip of their country and turned them over to the Gendarmes. In the International Settlement in Shanghai, the papers put out extras on the "raid" and while they sold like the proverbial hot cakes, the Chinese buying them, shrugged their shoulders and refused to believe it. Among the Chinese, Chiang Kai-shek has the reputation of being a great fibber and the Chinese people as a consequence are among the last to fall for the propaganda put out by his publicity bureaus if they fall. But in America men looked at one another and nodded seriously and said: "Serves them right—the Japanese have been raiding the Chinese cities, now the Chinese are raiding their cities."

It was a day or so later however that a real coup, the final thrust de luxe, was given. Madame Chi-

ang Kai-shek gave this one out herself. She made a confession. She told the foreign correspondents over tea what she said she knew the world, the Christian world, would be glad to know. People of many countries wondered, she said, why the six Chinese planes which had raided Japan did not rain death on the Japanese cities instead of pamphlets. Well she would tell the world why. It seemed, confided Madame, that several of the generals at the conference which preceded the air raid of Japan had advised and even insisted that the planes drop bombs on the Japanese cities, but that her husband, Chiang Kai-shek had risen to his feet and placing his hand on his bible, which Madame holds he always carries, he declared feelingly:

“This would not be a Christian thing to do. We must show the world that China is humane, that it cannot follow in the footsteps of the Japanese Barbarians and rain death upon innocent men, women and children.”

And did it register? The civilized world sat up and wondered. China was civilized, it said. China was showing the world at a time when the world needed to be shown. Here was the ruler of the people of an invaded nation whose cities and villages had been bombed by their enemy from the sky and yet when his planes succeeded in raiding the enemy's country, he refused to allow them to do likewise. On a great wave of sympathy by that

clever press agenting Madame Chiang Kai-shek pulled the Suchow defeat and the fleeing armies of her husband out of the hole and gave them another lease on life. Munitions credits abroad were strengthened. China, as Dr. Kung had told me, had the sympathy of the world.

If this had been actually so, I would be the first to credit the Generalissimo with a great act, but I know it wasn't. I know it was propaganda. I know it was framed. I know why it was framed, how it was framed. When I returned from China and her grim battlefields and her skeletons of cities and towns I could not erase from my mind another picture, a picture of a rich politician and war lord and his clever wife, a picture of a general whose agents with one hand slew narcotic addicts, and with another sold their fellows drugs, a war lord who made fine speeches and promises for the betterment of his people and whose people starved as they paid tribute from their meager earnings to support his armies and keep him, his family and his henchmen in their splendid palaces.

I saw the butcheries and the pillaging of his troops among their own, the private executions of his enemies whom he feared and envied, the assassination of Lo Po Hong of Shanghai and so many others who gave unselfishly of themselves and their fortunes to bring order out of chaos and who died under bullet or knife at home or in city streets because they refused to adhere to the code of rule

or ruin of a despot and thought more of their country and their people than they did of their own lives or property. More than three thousand Chinese have been killed because they sympathised with the efforts of Japan to rid China of the Bolshevik and the War Lord, dying under the assassin and the executioner's hand from July 1937 to July 1938.

When the Red henchmen of Chiang Kai-shek struck down Lo Po Hong in the streets of Shanghai, they killed China's best friend, one of China's few sons who thought more of China than he did of himself. Rich, a philanthropist, a Catholic, he spent his life ministering to the poor, hospitals, homes for the aged, for the lepers, asylums for the mad, institutes for the waifs of China and the babes whom coolie mothers threw to the dogs in the alleys because there was no food to feed them. Lo Po Hong did all of this. Standing not far from the place where he met death and not long before he died though he must have known an assassin's bullet would bring him down before his work was done, Lo Po Hong, a saint if there ever lived one, the Vincent de Paul of his country, told me of China and her sufferings under men like Chiang Kai-shek.

The war stripped him of his wealth but he begged and borrowed funds to carry on his work of charity and then when the Japanese, seeking to bring order out of chaos, to lift Shanghai from

its pit of black despair and to feed the countless thousands who came flocking back into the city after the Chinese armies had fled, begging food, Lo Po Hong joined with the Nipponese in setting up a system for the distribution of food for the hungry and medicine for the sick.

It was then, behind the Chiang Kai-shek lines, that Lo Po Hong was marked for death. He had come under the shadow of the stealthy killers from Pootung because he was not a Communist, because he would not subscribe to their program of murder and robbery. Now that he worked by the side of the Japanese Red Cross to save thousands from death, they killed him. They cut him down as they have cut scores of others, before that time and since, in the reign of terror that Chiang Kai-shek, having been beaten in open battle, waged behind the lines.

In Shanghai, we called them terrorists. They were known as Communists. But in the reports sent out by the Generalissimo's press bureau, they were described as "patriots." I have seen their bombs, hand grenades hurtle death into crowds. They slipped into the city of millions disguised as coolies. They mingled among the crowds. When they saw the Chinese who was marked to die in the crowds of men, women and children, Chinese or foreigners, they hurled their bomb. When it exploded more than likely it missed their man but

killed and maimed the people around him. And the assassins fled.

The police of the Internationalist Settlement strove desperately to deal with them. Great red vans, loaded with armed guards, wearing steel helmets, roamed the streets, closing off the blocks, searching the crowds, finding here and there one of them armed for the quick death of a Chiang Kai-shek foe. The Japanese military dealt with them shortly. The Japanese, being Asiatics, had a better way of finding them. And in Japanese territory these assassins were few. But in the International Settlement of Shanghai they abounded like rats in an old and festering ship. Whenever the Japanese spotted them or pursued them and crossed that International Settlement line after the slayers, there was conflict with the police and soldiery of the foreign powers.

You have often read in the headlines of your American papers, news to the effect that our marines have defied or ejected Japanese police or soldiers in the International Settlement. You have perhaps thrilled with something of pride that "our boys" were showing "those Japs" where to "get off." But you would blush for something of shame if you knew the real facts. If you realized that a city the size of Shanghai was infested with roving bands of Communist assassins and that the International Guards had so far been unable to suppress them and that death lurked that night or in the

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morning for one or more innocent people, perhaps Americans; if certain ones, spotted by the Japanese were caught, I say you might blush for shame if you knew our men stepped in, and out of something, perhaps false pride, blocked their impending captors and by so doing allowed the killers to escape.