

3 Ping Tsang Hsiang,  
Nanking.  
February 9, 1938.

Dear Nina:-

My last letter, that of February 3rd, brought my story up to December 13th. That day will long live in my memory, not because of any special danger that we were in, though some shells were flying about, as I have mentioned before, but because of certain incidents of the day that were so vivid as to be unforgettable. The first of these incidents occurred just after lunch. I mentioned in my letter of the 3rd that at that time we had our first contact with the Japanese troops, but I did not tell you the whole story then. The interesting part lies here. We decided after lunch, before going back to the International Committee's office at Ninghai Road, that we would take a look at the Japanese soldiers who, we knew, were in possession of the city, or at least of its southern portion. So as we reached Shanghai Road, on going west from Ping Tsang Hsiang, we decided to turn south and continue until we found a Japanese unit. But as we got to the foot of the hill on the north side of the American Embassy, Mr. Hatz, one of the German (or Austrian) members of the community met us in his car. He was driving north and was very much excited. Just then we noticed also that there was a small Chinese unit fully armed, just starting up the hill, under the lead of a young officer. We recognized this officer as one who had accompanied a superior to our headquarters earlier in the day and had, as we thought, given up his arms to us at the same time his superior did. But we were evidently mistaken, for here this young fellow was leading his little troupe of some fifteen or twenty men up the hill. We were surprised to see any Chinese troops heading south at a time like this, because those soldiers who were still in the city were in the northern part, and were divesting themselves of their equipment as fast as they could. (At least we knew that many were doing so). But to return to Mr. Hatz. He shouted to us that the Chinese should not go up the hill, that the Japanese troops were just at its foot on the other side. So we told these soldiers what Mr. Hatz had said and turned them back. Sure enough when we went up the hill ourselves and down its other side to Kwangchow Road, there we found the detachment which Mr. Hatz had seen. These soldiers were behaving very well. They were examining some Chinese who for some reason or other were there in one of the old city busses, but they did not seem to be harming any one. But I have often wondered what would have happened if this armed Chinese unit had gone up the hill and met the Japanese soldiers on the other side. They might have given a good account of themselves, for they were well armed, but they would soon have been outnumbered, and the end would have been certain death for them and perhaps for a good many civilians as well. As it was there was no fighting in that section of the city. We missed it, so to speak, just by a hair's breadth, or more literally just by a hill. Later when we turned back and went north again we found this same little band once more on the road, but this time they were marching north, not south. What happened to them later of course we never knew. They may have been among those whom the Japanese "mopped up" later, or among those they killed afterwards among the disarmed soldiers (if they did disarm), as they killed so many others, but there it was, part of the tragedy of war,

this little band marching to almost certain death, whether they marched north or south. Of course we did not know at the time that if they marched north, they were also probably marching to their death, for we still thought the Japanese would be decent to prisoners, and we thought that if they disarmed and managed to change into civilian clothes, they might escape, or at least that the worst that could happen to them would be to be made prisoners. But in all probability several of this band, if not all of them, were later killed, so general was the killing of persons suspected of being soldiers.

A second unforgettable incident of the day was our later contact with Japanese troops on Han Chung Road at a point a little east of Br. Handel Lee's house. The significance of this to me lay not so much in what Mr. Rabe and Lewis and I were trying to do then (see my previous letter of the third) as in the fact that we had to negotiate with the Japanese at all. After twenty-five years in China, it was a new experience to deal with those of an alien race about local matters. But there was nothing else to do. The Japanese were the undisputed masters of the city, and henceforth their word was to be law. It was simply the part of wisdom to make the best of that situation, but it did go against the grain. The officers with whom we talked in a mixture of English, German, Chinese, and Japanese (for we had with us a young white Russian who speaks some Japanese) seemed to understand fairly well what we were trying to tell them about the zone, the refugees, and the Red Cross hospital at the wai Chiao Pu. We parted from each other in a very cordial spirit, and we left in the hope that now the Japanese were in the city, our troubles were over. We little foresaw then that our worst troubles were just about to begin.

As we left the Japanese we drove straight down to Hsin Chieh Kou and then turned north on the Chung Shan road. The roads were all littered with the debris of the fighting and the retreat, mostly of the retreat, for the fighting had not been responsible for any great damage in the city above Hsin Chieh Kou. But everywhere on the roads was discarded military equipment of all kinds. One had to be cautious in driving in order to try not to hit a hand grenade or something of that sort that might explode if rolled or pressed the wrong way. However nothing happened to us and we got down to the Shansi Road Circle safely. There a strange sight met us, the third memorable thing of the day. Never have I seen a crowd that reminded me so much of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin". Here came a car at a snail's pace, and following it, and hanging onto its sides, scores and scores of men. In a moment I saw that the driver was Charlie Riggs. But why the crowd? And why were they hanging on to his car so? My first thought was that Charlie had perhaps knocked some one down with the car, and that the crowd was following trying to make him pay money or something of that sort. But I soon found out that that was not the case. The men were soldiers who had gone in the middle of the afternoon to the Headquarters of the International Committee in the Safety Zone, and had there given up their arms, and asked for protection. We had all along announced in every way we could that the zone could give no protection to soldiers as such, but we did think that the Japanese would treat unarmed men properly, and so when the men came to us, we told them that we thought that if they gave up their arms and entered one or another of the refugee camps they would be safe. In the morning some men had already come and given up their arms, but in the

afternoon while Mr. Rabe, Lewis, and I were off on the errand mentioned above, many more men came, gave up their arms and asked us to give them a place in our camps. There was one place, the Law College, where there were at that time less people than elsewhere, and Riggs was leading this group there when we met him. Poor fellows, many of them were done to death in the days that followed! It was, more truly than we realized, a case of "The Pied Piper". Probably most of those who followed Riggs that day never got back again to safety.

Just after Riggs and the crowd following him had passed, here came from another direction, this time from the east, another fairly large group of armed Chinese soldiers. At this time the Japanese were apparently almost all still south of Han Chung Lu and East Chung Shan Road. I was amazed to see so many Chinese soldiers still wandering aimlessly around the northern part of the city, but the city gates to the north were evidently all blocked, and there was no way for the men to get out. About this time John Magee, and McDaniels also drove up. They with Lewis and Rabe got out and persuaded these men also to disarm. They were Cantonese and hesitated to do so, but it was really the only thing for them to do. To keep their arms and try to fight meant certain death. Disarmed we felt they had a chance to be safe. The atmosphere was tense. We had just seen the Japanese in force on Han Chung Lu and Hsin Chieh Kou. These men were at the Shansi Road Circle, and we did not know but that at any moment Japanese columns might appear and street fighting break out at once. The Chinese would have been outnumbered, but trapped, they might have fought, and thing thus made worse still in that part of the city. Moreover as the Shansi Road Circle was just at the north-east corner of the Safety Zone where many refugees were gathered, we naturally wanted to avoid street fighting in that area if possible. I have said that the air was electric, and it became still more so as we heard rifle shots to the west. What did they mean? The shots were evidently quite near. There were not many of them, but one, then another, and another, and so on. Was there any shooting in the Zone? To our surprise we discovered that the shots came from a man on horseback coming from the west over towards the Shansi Road Circle. At first I thought the man must be a Japanese soldier, taking shots at people along the way, but I was wrong. The solitary horseman turned out to be a Chinese soldier, firing his rifle at random in the air, whether to keep up his courage or not, I don't know. But there he was, astride his beast, and now and again firing his gun. One wonders too whatever became of him.

Lewis and John Magee wanted to go on down to the Ministry of Railways and advise the troops that we heard were still down there also to disarm, but I felt it was too risky. I expected the Japanese to come to the northern part of the city at any moment, and in that case I thought we might likely get caught in a cross fire between the two. I trust I was not cowardly, but I felt that was just too great a risk to run. Later John Magee and Cole (the white Russian of whom I spoke above) did go into that part of the city on an errand regarding wounded soldiers, and got back without difficulty, but they did not get into touch with the soldiers at the Ministry. There was not time. We never heard afterwards what happened to the men. They too were doubtless among the many killed.

(To be continued)

(Continuing letter of Feb. 9

That night, the night of December 13th, Sone and I had to run about the streets on certain Red Cross errands. To my amazement, on one of these trips, we came across another group of Chinese soldiers going about armed. This simply shows the confusion that prevailed in the city that day. The Japanese were in full control of the southern half of the city by noon of the 13th, certainly by three or four o'clock they had troops in force up as far as Nan Chung Road, but they did not make apparently any determined effort to advance into the northern part of the city until fairly late on that evening. Why they waited until so late to consolidate their control over the city as a whole, I do not know. After I went to bed that night there were occasional shots that indicated that the "mopping up" process was under way. At no time, day or night, was there any real street fighting. Neither was there on the 13th, or at any time thereafter, any sniping from the Safety Zone area. For this we were very thankful, else it might have given the Japanese an excuse for attacking the zone. After dark on the night of the 13th it was not safe for any Chinese to be on the streets, though as might have been expected among so many thousands of people, some had to be on the streets for one reason or another. Mr. Gee and Mr. Ku of the University had a narrow escape that evening. They were going just from the University to the Illicks' house where they were staying - you know what a short distance that is - when they were accosted by a sentry. They would very likely have been killed then and there, because the sentry seemed very suspicious of them, had it not been for the sudden and unexpected appearance of Charlie Riggs, who chanced to be going back past the University to Pin Tsang Hsiang. Even so, when Charlie tried to explain who the men were, the sentry did not want to let the men go, partly I think because he did not understand fully what Charlie was saying. Finally however, when Riggs gave up the attempt to explain that the men were members of the University, and said in response to a query from the sentry that they were his "servants" they were allowed to proceed.

It took the next two days to make us realize fully what we were up against with the Japanese. After the 13th the soldiers were turned loose, and what happened between then and January 1st the world now knows fairly well. All of us are agreed that the weeks of air raids and the actual fighting around the city, were as nothing from the standpoint of physical and mental strain as compared with the first two weeks of Japanese occupation. During that time we really felt that we were contending with the powers of evil. To plead for the lives of men, as Mr. Rabe, Lewis, and I did on one memorable afternoon, to see them released, go receive the smiles and thanks of the men, only to come back two hours later to find not only the thirty or forty men who had been tied up, but that whole camp of several hundred, being taken away - the memory of it will forever remain with me. We could do nothing to avert the tragedy. Fresh "orders" had been received and the men were led out to their death. I came home one day during those weeks to lunch only to find the group solemn and sober as Charlie was telling with tears in his eyes how the men had been taken from one of the camps that very morning. He had tried to do what he could and had only been slapped for his pains. The worst of this war is not the burned buildings and ruined homes, bad as that is, it is the men who will never come back again and the women who to their dying day will carry in their hearts and in their bodies the pain and injury of unbridled lust. I scarcely know which is sadder, men led away to death or the panic of women fleeing from the terror.

With love,