

LOWELL THOMAS, FROM CHUNGKING, JUNE 6, 1945

(Used as Transcription, from Manila,
on June 12, 1945)

GOOD MORNING, EVERYBODY:-

No one knows yet where the final battles in the war with Japan will be fought. But there are many who think that after the cities of Japan have all been reduced, it still will be necessary to defeat the Mikado's armies on the mainland of Asia. If it works out that way, then China will be the final great theatre of the Pacific war. Also, it will mean that the head of the Chinese government will be an increasingly important figure in the war.

The number one objective of every correspondent when he first arrives in China is to meet Chiang Kai-Shek. And no wonder. For as many years as many of us can remember, China and Chiang Kai Shek have been synonymous. He is more than a Chief of State. he is

a legendary figure.

I spent more than an hour with the Generalissimo, and will tell you what he said to me, as accurately as I can. We were alone. That is, as alone as one can ever expect to be with the top man of any major country whose language you are unable to speak. The Generalissimo told me that he neither speaks nor understands English; and, my Chinese is not so good!

General Al Wedemeyer, Commander-in-Chief of all our forces in China, introduced us. That meant a great deal, because General Wedemeyer probably stands higher with the Generalissimo than any military figure who has been in China in many years. Hollington Tong, Vice Minister of the Information Bureau, who is the Generalissimo's official interpreter, did a superb job of rapidly translating the conversation; I suspect that he improved on my part of it. A Chinese General, and a Colonel who is the Generalissimo's aid, sat across the room, listening, watching, as inanimate as

the bowls of flowers. Also, an able young Chinese American, Lieutenant Horace Eng, of General Wedemeyer's staff, sat silently taking notes.

We spent an hour in one of the cool, spacious rooms of the Generalissimo's home on the south bank of the Chia Ling River, which flows into the Yangtze at that promintory so familiar to all of us in pictures. From there we went out into Chiang Kai Shek's gardens and continued our talk.

The Generalissimo told me that he hopes to visit the United States, in the near future. This in reply to a question as to whether it might not be a good idea for the heads of the major powers to hold one of their meetings in America. He added that he had long wanted to visit our country, and had long dreamed of seeing with his own eyes the things he has heard so much about. He said he hopes to do this soon.

// In response to a question about someone to succeed him, since man is only mortal, he gave an

interesting reply. He is not old; only in his middle fifties. But he has been the head of the Nationalist Government now for twenty years, a long time for any man to hold the reins of power. In fact, he has played such a dominant role in China, for so long, that it isn't easy to think of the government here without him at the head of it. His answer was that as rapidly as possible he is channelizing the government, as he put it, in a democratic, constitutional manner, so that it will soon be well enough organized, and on a sufficiently solid democratic foundation, that it will survive regardless of who the future leaders happen to be.

The above came out in the course of a description he was giving me of his more than thirty years as a public figure in China. Speaking of the history of his country, he pointed out that for three thousand and more years, China was an absolute monarchy; that he himself

joined Sun Yat Sen and his revolutionary movement, in 1907, when he was nineteen years old; that in five years, by the time he was twenty-four years old, the revolution had succeeded, the three thousand year old monarchy had been overthrown, and the new regime, the Chinese Republic, firmly established. He went on to say that for twenty years, he has been engaged in carrying out what he calls "The Destructive Phase."

By this he meant the suppressing of innumerable war lords, the thwarting of attempts to restore the monarchy -- and the waging of interminable war.

But he added with great emphasis that much constructive work has been done in this same period; as he put it, against almost overwhelming odds. To illustrate he referred to the ten years he has been making his headquarters here in the Province of Szechwan, and said that when he first came, a traveler who made a journey for as short a distance as a hundred miles, had to pay tribute to three war lords. He declared that going from

Chungking to Kunming in those days meant a journey of twenty-four days, with another sixteen days added if you continued on to Lungling, some two hundred and thirty miles to the west on the route to Burma and India. And then he told with pride of the network of roads he has built, of which the Burma Road is only one.

With even more fervor he spoke of the change in the appearance, the improved health of the people. He said that when he and his colleagues came to Szechwan, the inhabitants were like walking skeletons, partly because of malnutrition, but also because most of the population had fallen under the demoralizing influence of opium. Then he told how the opium habit had been wiped out. And he spoke of the round, smiling faces now to be seen in Chungking, Chengtu, and elsewhere.

After pointing out these things he said that

what had been done so far was only a beginning.

But he feels that when you consider the age of China and the state of decay into which it had fallen, that thirty-odd years has not been too long a time for what he terms The Destructive Period for the elimination of reactionary elements to where he says it is now possible to announce the beginning of a new period in Chinese history.

In spite of constructive work already done, the Generalissimo said he felt that the Constructive Period is getting under way right at this moment. In the few months that General Wedemeyer has been here defeatism has all but vanished. The Chinese forces have had some victories to buck them up. More and more supplies are arriving for the war with Japan. And everybody, from veteran correspondents to military and State Department people, as well as the Chinese, have been telling me that General Wedemeyer has been a great success. In fact, I am wondering whether all this may

not have something to do with the Generalissimo's announcement that China is now entering that long hoped for phase of her political, social, and economic history, what he calls The Constructive Period.

Inevitably the subject of the Chinese Communists came up. Chiang Kai Shek spoke of them without my asking the usual questions: "What role are the Communists playing? Will he ever get together with them? And so on. He denied that they were as many in number as has been reported. Despite the fact that many are saying otherwise, the Generalissimo insisted to me that the so-called Chinese Communists are not a major problem.

Incidentally, he spoke with great enthusiasm about the work done by missionaries in China. And he volunteered this. I wasn't surprised that he spoke in praise of them; but, I was surprised by the tremendous enthusiasm with which he spoke about the part

missionaries have played in putting new life into China.

As I was about to leave I told Chiang Kai-Shek that no matter how many American press and radio people he had met in the past, their number would shrink into insignificance when the coming journalistic invasion gets under way -- now that the war in Europe is over. He laughed, and thanked me for the tip, and said he would at once prepare himself to meet the invasion. With the modesty and politeness for which the Chinese are justly famed, he remarked that he felt himself totally inadequate when it came to meeting the press.

As has often been said, the Generalissimo's pictures do not do him justice. He is neither cold, austere, nor poker-faced. On the contrary, he is warm, gracious, animated, and exceedingly articulate. He looks you straight in the eye, and speaks with a directness and an enthusiasm that causes you to come

away feeling that whatever the future may hold in store for the half billion people of this ancient land, that for twenty years a strong and unusually capable man has been the leader of a country that is fast emerging from thirty centuries of oppression; that China, "Land of Opium," "The Sleeping Giant," is indeed awake and on the march.

Tomorrow I hope to report to you on a journey I have made right across China to where the Chinese armies are chasing the retreating Japs. So long, until tomorrow, and now all the way back to New York and the NBC.

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews
and L.T. from Chungking
~~an~~ important announcement just in informs
us of a major attempt to solve the Polish problem.

In Moscow on Friday, there will be a meeting of representatives of the various Polish groups involved, leaders of the Soviet sponsored regime in Warsaw, leaders of Polish democracy inside of Poland and democratic Polish leaders from abroad. Among these last is the former Premier of the Polish government in exile - Former Premier ~~██████████~~ Mee-ko-lah-chik. The news comes from the British Foreign office, which states invitations to the conference have been issued by the Soviet Government.

At the same time, Presidential Emissary Harry Hopkins returned to Washington today - after his mission to Moscow in behalf of President Truman. Hopkins is reported to be bringing important proposals from Soviet Premier Stalin - and it may well be that one angle of this concerns the meeting of the Poles to be held in Moscow on Friday. The White House late this

afternoon announced that information concerning the Hopkins mission will be disclosed by President Truman at a press conference tomorrow.

And now, let's hear from Lowell Thomas, by transcription from *Somewhere in the Pacific*, ~~_____~~ ~~_____~~

OKINAWA

The Japs are making their last stand on Okinawa, and advises from the island indicate that their destruction is - a mere matter of days. Their case is the more hopeless because of new American landings on the southernmost shore of the island - tightening the net around the trapped and doomed enemy.

Ten thousand enemy troops are being smashed with everything that modern war can devise. But it's ferocious going for our men. ~~■~~ The Japs are making their last stand at the top of a rugged escarpment, with ridges so steep that American troops, to get up to them, have to use scaling ladders of rope.

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This bitter last phase on Okinawa follows a rejection of an American demand for surrender. The demand was dropped to the Jap commander from an airplane. And, to make it the more persuasive, all American artillery ceased fire, awaiting a reply.

There was a strange silence in the American lines. But the Japs didn't stop shooting, and it was apparent they were taking advantage of the cessation of

fire to strengthen their positions. All of which meant -
surrender demand rejected. Its only effect was to bring
in six ragged Japanese prisoners. So the guns opened
fire in simultaneous force again. The top of the enemy
held ridge erupted with explosions, and the last phase
of the battle for Okinawa was on.

JAPAN BOMBING

Tokyo tells of still another American air assault against the Japanese home islands - Japan under attack for the seventh consecutive day. Tokyo describes the assaulting air fleets as ranging from wasp-like fighters to giant B-29s. Their targets were air fields on Kyushu, Japan's southernmost island - those airfields from which Jap suicide planes take off.

CHINA

The sweeping Japanese retreat in China seems to have halted - with word from Chungking telling of violent enemy counter-attacks. One of these has recaptured Ishan. That important city had been abandoned in the course of Japanese withdrawals, but now has fallen again to a sudden Jap counter-offensive.

In addition to the counter-attacks, Chungking reports that enemy resistance has stiffened everywhere - which would make it appear that ~~the~~ Japs have reached a line along which they intend to stand.

BORNEO

The news from Borneo indicates that the invading Australians have not yet encountered any serious Japanese resistance. They are reported to be nearing the city of Brunei, capital of the sector into which they are driving -- the protectorate of Brunei.

And now -- Goodnight.