CHAPTER IX

SHANGHAI DURING EIGHT YEARS OF WAR

八年抗戰在上海

IN the year 1937, the fighting with Japan finally flared in full scale war after the initial fighting in Shanghai. At that time, the Wei Ming Factory had just moved to its new, enlarged plant located near its old premises at the intersection of Jui Tseng Jen Road (瑞眞人路) in the French Concession.

We had about 1,000 workers, and most of them were provided with board and lodging by our company. But with the war raging all around them, the workers were upset. They saw their relatives, members of their own families, and people all around Shanghai on the move -- refugees fleeing from the on-rushing war.

I saw then that the war was not likely to be a short conflict. I was convinced that if I was able to escape to my village or even travel a few hundred miles further, I would not really be able to escape from the inferno which was closing in threateningly all around us.

During the time of war, it is always not quite prudent to advise people what to do. I recalled that I reached the decision that it would be best for each of our employee to decide what he wished to do. Nevertheless, I called no fewer than three meetings with my staff so that I could outline to my colleagues my estimation of the situation. I also announced our plans to meet the emergency.

At that time the Wei Ming factory had husbanded a substantial stock of staple food and had an adequate amount of cash. I made it clear that if the workers were ready to

continue working and stay at the plant, we were prepared to carry on.

However, if some of the workers wanted to leave to return to their native villages, we would pay them *$10 each (which was equivalent to about a month's pay for an ordinary worker). I explained that the workers could make their own decision whether to stay or to leave.

After the first meeting, about one-third of the workers chose to leave. Following the second meeting, one-third of the remaining also left. The war situation became tense, and after the third meeting, another third went away, leaving only 200 to 300 workers who were determined to stay behind and work as usual.

Japanese bombers were flying constantly over our factory. We had built air-raid shelters which were considered adequate enough at that time to keep us from harm. When Japanese planes came overhead, we abandoned work and rushed to our shelters. We knew that war was all around us.

Although my house and my office were located near the Nanyang Bridge area near Tibet Road, in the French Concession, which was safe for the time being from the threats of fighting, I continued to make usual daily visits to the factory in order to assure my workers that I was ready to share their lot.

The Wei Ming plant was located near the South Railway Station in Shanghai – one of the prime targets of the Japanese bombers. Thus whenever the Japanese planes came to drop their deadly load on the Station, our factory was in their flight path. Once, when I was having lunch at the factory I had to run into the air-raid shelter thrice before I was able to finish my meal.

Like many patriotic Chinese, I was heartened by the country's courageous resistance, and after years of oppression when all Chinese had to suffer in silence, we now had an opportunity of venting our feelings openly.

But as head of a manufacturing organisation with a large

*The value of the dollar then was about $110 an ounce of gold.

group of people dependent on me for their safety as well as their livelihood, I had to think in terms of making all the necessary provisions for them so that they would not fall victim to the conflict even before our plant was touched by war's conflagration.

At that time, the Government, with a view toward establishing a war-time industrial base to make continued resistance possible, had organised a committee to help the larger factories in Shanghai to re-locate in the interior. Among the flashlight and battery manufacturers, two were selected by the Government for re-location. These were the United Flashlight and Battery Works operated by the Government's National Resources Commission, and the Wei Ming plant.

I was naturally glad that we had the opportunity of serving the country at war and doing my part at this crucial time. I decided that we would make immediate preparations for moving portions of our equipment to the interior so that we too could do our part in the war efforts.

I remember that the person assigned by the Government to handle the re-location programme was Mr Ling Chi-yung, who had a temporary office in the French Concession. I was much impressed by his devotion to his job. One morning when I called on him to discuss our plans for moving our equipment to the interior, I found him already busily at work, although it was not quite eight o'clock.

In order to encourage Shanghai manufacturers to move their plants to their war-time base, the Government decided on subsidizing them on the removal expenses at a certain amount per ton. Wei Ming made arrangements to move several hundred tons of its equipment, and we were entitled by the subsidy arrangement to collect several thousand dollars in helping us to defray our packing expenses.

I felt, however, that it was my duty to work for my country when she was at war. I had bought some *$30,000 worth of National Salvation Bonds, and I naturally would not accept any subsidy from the Government to help my plant in

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moving its equipment to the interior.

Wei Ming's equipment and supplies were shipped on board wooden junks from Shanghai, first to Chinkiang and thence to Hankow at a time when tension gripped the entire military transport situation. I had to stay back in Shanghai to run the factory and I sent two of my colleagues to accompany the shipment and handle the removal operation.

When our equipment reached Hankow, the city was already tense with the threat of war. Factories which set up operation there were rushing to move again further inland to Szechuan. The two colleagues whom I sent refused to go any further, and I had no choice but to allow them to return.

I, therefore, had to write and explain the whole situation to Mr Ling, asking him to assist us in forwarding our equipment and supplies onward to Szechuan. Mr Ling was most helpful, and because of his efforts, our shipment finally managed to arrive in Chungking. But when the crates were unloaded, they were left on the waterfront, and nobody took the trouble of storing them away at a safe place. Later, I was informed by our agents in Chungking that the entire shipment was destroyed by Japanese bombers.

I did not much mind the destruction of our equipment and supplies in Chungking, but with much of the country along the inland waterways under occupation by the Japanese, it was now impossible for us make another attempt to ship additional equipment to the interior. I had always been distressed by the fact that as a result of this development I had to be stranded in Shanghai, unable to join the war efforts of the Government in Chungking.

With the failure of our plans to move into the interior, we were still left with the problem of maintaining several hundred workers in Shanghai, which was then ringed by Japanese forces. I had wanted to close the plant, because I was repelled by the thought of working as an ignominious and compliant subject under the Japanese and Chinese puppet rule. I considered it equally repulsive to remain in Japan-controlled Shanghai and dally in war-time profiteering

ventures.

But faced with the problem of the livelihood of several hundred employees who wanted to continue working in our plant, I could not very well abandon them. Furthermore, if I closed down the factory, I naturally would suffer a total loss, while the country at large would gain nothing.

I also felt that the nurturing of China's industrial growth, small and slow as it was, had been laboriously and bitterly won. I thought it was my duty to preserve even this small bit of the nation's economic vitality by continuing production at the Wei Ming plant.

Having thus made my decision, I found a factory site in the French Concession. I bought the land and building there and resumed production. But in order to persevere in my determination not to work with either the Japanese or the Chinese puppets they had installed, I steadfastly refused to expand. And during eight years of Japanese occupation, I never left the International Settlement and the French Concession. In fact, I did not even venture out to the North Railway Station. At that time this area was already under Japanese control. This, at least, was my passive way of showing my resistance.

When fighting broke out with the Japanese on August 13, 1937, the patriotic fervour of the Chinese people was at a fever pitch. The people of Shanghai rallied with flowers and food for the defenders, and the receiving stations were literally inundated with gifts. I felt that flowers were of little practical value, while the food would certainly spoil before it even reached the front lines.

I refrained from participating in this frenzied demonstration of patriotism. Instead I sold a consignment of 99.9 percent pure copper ingots, part of the supplies we had stocked up for the manufacture of flashlights, and the money was used to buy *$30,000 worth of National Salvation Bond.

The war dragged on, and the weather turned cold. I learned that the defenders – many of them belonging to

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units transferred from the South – were still wearing summer uniforms. I decided that it would be useful to buy them some warm clothes. I ordered several thousand woollen jackets, and on each I had a small cloth patch attached, bearing the inscription: "Respectfully presented to the heroic defenders of our national soil; resist the invaders with the spirit of the Dreadnaught." (Dreadnaught was the trade mark of our flashlights.) I felt that this type of gift, of practical use to the defenders, was more meaningful than flowers and food.

Not before long, reports of military reverses began to reach Shanghai, and soon, almost without warning, the Chinese defenders withdrew from the environs of the metropolis. As the troops fell back, the first wave of patriotic fervour began to ebb. At the same time with Shanghai under the iron heels of the Japanese and their Chinese puppets, pressure began to mount against all those who were not prudent enough to abandon valour for discretion. When friends met, they seldom ever talked about subjects connected with the state of the nation.

In the International Settlement in Shanghai, there were a number of Chinese soldiers who had become separated from their retreating units and had missed the evacuation to the interior. They were left on their own and no one bothered to take care of them.

One day I happened to walk into a hostel for wounded soldiers at Ching Liang Temple. There I met a wounded soldier from Szechuan Province who told me that he had been wounded in the fierce battle around Quanshan, a railway town near Shanghai. He said that the fighting in that sector was so intense that defending units were repeatedly bloodied. His own unit, he said, was so battle-shattered that it had to be reorganised no less than five times, until he did not even know the name of his battalion commander.

He was then suffering from a high fever. His story and his plight moved me. When I went back to the city, I began to talk with a group of like-minded business friends and urged them to do something to help the abandoned soldiers. Some

contributed cash, and these included Tien Fah Ya Electric Appliance Store and Mr Chao Lu-ching who each donated *$200, while Mr Li Shiu-ching who donated *$100.

Others joined the aid movement by contributing their time and their work. These included Mr Fu Chih-feng, Mr Shen Tien-yang, Mr Ling Chao, Mr Shen Ching-yang, Mr Ku Chen-hsueh, Mr Hwa Chiang-hsun, Mr Jao Yu-fei and myself. We managed to raise *$4,000.

With the money in hand, we hired three cars and spent two days visiting every one of the 13 wounded soldiers' receiving stations.

We distributed to each soldier one dollar in cash. Our group was divided into several teams, with four men in each team. One person called out the names, another handed out the money, a third kept the account, and another one made a brief address on our behalf.

Although the movement was organised by me personally, we nevertheless made the presentation in the name of the members of the Shanghai Electric Appliance Manufacturers' Association.

I still recall the brief talk we made before the wounded soldiers. We said: "Comrades, you have suffered on our behalf. We, the members of the Shanghai Electric Appliance Manufacturers Association, are here to bring you solace. We had wanted to bring you some food, but not knowing what kind of food each one of you like best, we decided to bring you *$1 each as a gift. With this you can buy the food you like best. The amount is very small indeed, but it is a token of our deep feeling and concern. We wish you all an early recovery!"

One of the soldiers who heard our talk told us: "If all Chinese people are like you gentlemen, China will never perish." This created a lasting impression on all of us. Immediately after the visit, we went to Hung Yung Lou Restaurant on Foochow Road for dinner. There in front of all those who had taken part in the effort, we gave a detailed accounting of the *$4,700 which we raised. Then we burned

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all papers that had anything to do with the project to bring the whole matter to a close. It was one of those things which very few people were inclined to undertake in those days.

When the Japanese first occupied Shanghai in the early stages of the war, their troops did not enter the International Settlement. Wei Ming's business office was in the French Concession, and I never ventured into the Chinese territory outside the Settlement where the Japanese were garrisoned. It was a mentally oppressive state of existence, but life in general was tolerable.

Then Pearl Harbour ignited the war in the Pacific, and the Japanese troops marched into the International Settlement and the French Concession. With that, hardship and suffering for people in the occupied areas became increasingly more unbearable.

This was especially true for me. I did not relish the idea of war profiteering but I must keep production going at the Wei Ming Factory. Raw materials were in short supply. Restriction had been imposed on the use of electricity. The value of the currency continued to depreciate. Under these trying circumstances, I was forever faced with an inner conflict.

My own patriotism made me reject the idea of hoarding any foreign exchange, and up until the end of the war, the Wei Ming Factory did not own any foreign exchange holdings at all. When I saw the inflation growing rampant, and the currency depreciating with the passage of each day, I had no recourse but to invest in real estate and to send some of my employees to the the countryside to buy lumber and other materials in order to safeguard the value of our assets. During this period I purchased quite a few pieces of property in Shanghai.

As a patriotic citizen, I did not want to register our "Dreadnaught" brand name with the Ministry of Industry of the puppet Wang Ching-wei regime in Nanking. As the war continued, the "Dreadnaught" brand attracted an increasing number of imitators masquerading under our trade mark,

with considerable adverse effect on the good name of Wei Ming's own product. As our trade mark was not registered, we had no recourse to law, and there was every possibility that the genuine product was being taken as an imitation.

I mulled over the matter repeatedly, and at last I came to the conclusion that those who marketed the imitation products were only interested in turning a profit. Hence, I thought, if I sold my "Dreadnaught" brand products at cost, without any profit at all, then those who were paddling the imitations would have no money to make and no further reason to continue to pirate my brand name.

I put my deduction into practice and it worked. I took the wind out of my imitators' sails, and quite a number of the imitators came to me to have a chat. They wanted to close down shop and asked me if I would take over their equipment and supplies. Thereafter, no one was interested in imitating the "Dreadnaught" brand. But in my effort to weed out the imitators by my price-cutting campaign, I was sorry to find that several legitimate factories in the trade also suffered along with the imitators. I had not expected this to happen.

Before the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, Wei Ming had always had an ample stock of essential raw materials. But after several years of war, with supplies interrupted, we were beginning to experience shortages. But because of Wei Ming's position of dominance in the trade, it was not expedient for us to go openly into the market to bid for raw materials. Such an attempt would have immediately triggered a sharp rise in prices.

We thus had to use all our resourcefulness and try to replenish our raw materials by asking small factories to buy on our behalf. We barely managed to get a sufficient amount of materials by using this method.

But there were other problems. Electric power was in restricted supply, and spare parts were difficult to get. We resorted to all types of makeshift means to carry on our production.

We began to use a steam generating turbine to help us to get more electricity. We also put together a 200-ton grinding machine to produce manganese powder. These and many other improvisations were made possible by the inventiveness of our colleagues at Wei Ming, and I must say that their ingenuity contributed in no small measure to the viability of Shanghai manufacturers during wartime.

Meantime, the Japanese were paying special attention to us because they were anxious to know whether our batteries, which were widely used by underground radio receiving and broadcasting stations, were being sold to the Chinese guerillas.

It was a serious offence in the Japanese occupied areas to be caught selling to the Chinese military units. In view of this, I had taken special precautions. I made it a rule that all wholesale buyers must be registered. I also discontinued all deliveries to customers. But even with these precautions, the Japanese continued to make trouble for us.

Once, when I declined to allow plain-clothes Japanese gendarmes to inspect our factory, a serious incident occurred and I was asked to go to the Sungshan Road Police Station to submit to questioning.

When a police officer, by the name of Ling San, saw how I stood up to the threat of the Japanese, he shook my hands and told me that during all his years as a policeman in Shanghai's foreign concessions, he had never seen another Chinese who was as courageous as I in refuting the outrageous charges of a foreigner.

But on the eve of V J day, I also underwent the experience of being arrested by the Japanese. On July 28, 1945, I was taken by the Japanese gendarmes and imprisoned in their headquarters at Avenue Petain. It was not until the Japanese surrender that I was released on August 13.

Before the outbreak of the war, I had come to know a number of Japanese through my business contacts. But with the war, I no longer felt that I wanted to continue my relations with the Japanese. There was, however, only one

exception, Mr Kotaro Okamura, a graduate of the Tung Wen College in Shanghai, which was a Sino-Japanese school. I have always had a great respect for his courage and his struggle against the greatest of odds. I continued my friendship with him. He had first worked for the Kiu Fu Company. Later he joined the Asia Steel Works, a plant of considerable size. He was a conscientious worker, a just and righteous man. To this day he is still one of my best friends.

I remembered that because of our respective patriotic feelings, we often had heated arguments on the question of the Sino-Japanese war. Once he told me that relations between nations are different from relations between individuals. Between countries, he told me, power was the only deciding factor, and justice simply did not exist.

I did not want to appear that I agreed with him, but privately I felt that he knew more about international politics than I did. I read afterwards that the United States Congress had declared an embargo on supplies going to both China and Japan, except supplies carried by the country's own vessels. This bill, I realised was clearly slanted in favour of Japan and was disadvantageous to the Chinese.

Then the British closed the Burma Road – another blow to China. I felt even more that one could not expect justice in this world. Not long afterwards, the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour ignited the war in the Pacific. Every night I used my earphones to listen to the broadcasts from the interior. (At the time the Japanese had banned all short-wave radios, and sealed all short-wave receiving sets.) One night I heard a broadcast from Kunming which confirmed an earlier local newspaper report that the battleship HMS Prince of Wales had been sunk by Japanese suicide squads near Singapore. I had not wanted to believe the earlier local report, thinking that it was only Japanese propaganda. I was truly disheartened by this radio report, and was dejected by the dismal prospects of mankind's future. I did not begin to recover my confidence in the ultimate triumph of justice over brutal power until the United States began gradually to

recover ground in the Pacific.

When Japan surrendered, Mr Okamura inevitably lost all the business enterprises which he had painstakingly built up in Shanghai over more than a decade. When he was ready to be repatriated, I had already left Shanghai for Hongkong. But I sent instructions to my staff in Shanghai to give him the assistance he needed from time to time.

When Mr Okamura arrived in Japan, he found that there was nothing he could do. He had lost all his money in Shanghai, and he was without funds. I arranged loans and investments to help him in establishing the Kaimei Shindo Company Ltd in Kyoto. Because of Mr Okamura's tireless efforts, the plant today stands in the forefront among factories owned even by Japanese themselves in personnel management, in business and in profit ratio. It also added an aluminium section, and I must say that Kai Mei Shindo Company Ltd is today a well-established industrial enterprise in Japan. Mr Okamura himself has also made a place for himself.

This, I feel, is an outstanding example of my efforts to help others toward the road of success, and whenever I think of this, it always warms my heart to recall this unusual friendship between friends of different nationalities.

Some Helpful Friends I met During the War

When I went to Shanghai as a young boy, my first job was that of an apprentice in a silk and piecegoods store owned by a man from Ningpo. Hence, although I came from Wusih, in the Kiangsu Province, the people I met most frequently in my boyhood were people from Ningpo, in the Chekiang Province. In fact, in my early years, struggling to get started in a business career, I mingled mostly with Ningpo people, and lost contact with my compatriots from Wusih.

Even when I launched my own business, most my personal and business friends were still natives of Ningpo. It was not until I joined the Wusih Residents' Association during the war that I came to know some of the Wusih people who were engaged in business and industry in

Shanghai.

Among my Ningpo friends, the one I always remember first was Mr Chiu Yue-sing. He was a typical romantic; also a man of genius. He was an outstanding writer, capable of putting his ideas on paper with lightning speed. He worked for the Shang Pao, the Commercial Daily, and he also served once as a magistrate of Lung Yue Hsien (County) in Chekiang Province.

He was a straightforward person and a scholar. These qualities did not help him to get very far in the political world, although he knew many important people in government, and his outlook and ideas were modern.

When war with Japan broke out, he was leading a leisurely life in Shanghai. He was wont to be outspokenly criticial of the outrageous conduct and the various devious ways of those who collaborated with the enemy. Later he took the advice of friends, travelled via a circuitous route to the Chinese wartime capital of Chungking. He later wrote to say that he was working in the "Head Office" which, in fact, was the Secretariat of the Military Affairs Commission of the Chinese National Government, which, for obvious reasons during wartime, could not be openly identified in letters to Japanese occupied areas. But not long afterwards we heard that he fell sick and died in Szechuan, where China's wartime capital was located.

This saddened me. He was widely read, a thoughtful scholar with a fiery patriotic fervour. As a result of our close relationship, I learned a great deal.

Through his instruction, I came to know a member of the Control Yuan of the Chinese National Government. Mr Liu Chao-min. Mr Liu had little formal schooling, but he managed to educate himself. He was, in fact, one of the earliest military men to join Dr Sun Yat-sen in his revolutionary activities. He came to Shanghai to undertake various missions for the Chinese Government. One of the things he did on behalf of the Government was to persuade Mr Hsu Chung-chih, a Kuomintang leader, to leave

enemy-occupied Shanghai for Chungking, thus indirectly contributing a great deal to the national interest.

I also met Mr Huo Shou-hua through Mr Chiu's introduction. Mr Huo was a native of Chungshan county in the province of Kwangtung, but he lived in Shanghai for many years. He was well informed on all phases of social conditions and was an honest man with high ideals. He was not interested in becoming a government official and fame meant nothing to him. He served as one of the directors of the Kwangtung Residents' Association, and devoted a great deal of time and effort to welfare projects, including scholarship grants and financial aid to students who sought higher education abroad.

When Mr Fung Shao-shan served as Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, it was Mr Huo who moved behind the scene, giving the Chamber Chairman all the necessary support. I found Mr Huo to be a man with a profound concept of nationalism. During the eight years of war I visited him constantly, seeing him every four or five weeks. And on each visit, I always managed to come away with valuable advice and ideas.

There was also Mr Chien Sun-chin, another elderly gentleman, who was a person I respected most. He was once the Chairman of the Wusih General Chamber of Commerce. He and his twin brother, Mr Chien Chi-po, were highly educated and had enjoyed both literary fame ever since they were young men. Mr Chien Chi-po was a professor at universities in Shanghai and Hankow, and he made a name for himself as a scholar. His brother, Mr Chien Sun-chin, while less known academically, was noted for his integrity and scholarship – and on this score the twin brothers were at par.

Mr Chien Sun-chin was by nature a retiring man, with no interest in wealth or fame. After serving as the principal of the Wusih Normal School, he retired and retreated into seclusion, away from noisy and soul-less centres of commere, leading a simple, contented life.

Even in his quiet retirement, his words and actions still had a great effect on the local community which held him in the highest esteem. He also continued to give the Chamber of Commerce much of his advice and his time.

When war broke out, he decided to leave Wusih, fearing that the Japanese would try to make use of him. He moved to the International Settlement in Shanghai and served as Chairman of the Wusih Residents' Association. I met him after I became a member of the Association, and found him a mild and cultured gentleman of the old school. He always spoke with measured care, reflecting at once the breadth of his mind and the generosity of his heart. When he talked, he gave one the feeling that a breath of fresh spring wind had blown into the room.

I was deeply impressed by him. I visited him frequently and sought his counsel whenever I had an opportunity to do so. If for two or three weeks I failed to pay him a visit, I would inevitably be overcome by an inexplicable feeling of stagnation. And I would not feel refreshed again until I had a long talk with him.

He was some twenty years my senior, but he was always kind enough to overlook this difference in age and talk with me without the least pretension. Our conversation would range over a wide area: affairs of state, the proper conduct of men. He was always earnest and never niggardly in giving a younger person the benefit of his wisdom and experience.

He once told me the story about a meeting he had when he was still a young man with the great Chinese scholar Mr Chang Tai-yen, during the early years of the Republic. Mr Chang was visiting Wusih, and he asked Mr Chien to give his views on how to deal with people in an age which had lost both its hope and its morality.

Mr Chien answered in great respect by saying, "Sir, I am an ignorant young man. May I, Teacher, hear your views?" Whereupon, Mr Chang said that in this age, if one didn't tear the mask off the face of the bad characters and treated them circumspectly as good people, it would prevent the evildoers

from going to the extreme and cause them to refrain from perpetuating too many wicked deeds.

From this story I could see the wisdom of Mr Chang Tai-yen and also Mr Chien's seasoned humanity. It also enlightened me and helped me tremendously in my dealing with people in later years.

Mr Chien Sun-chin led an extremely simple and frugal life, and his Spartan habits could hardly be equalled by any one. But he was always absorbed in national affairs and in the well-being of the community where he grew up. I often saw a large number of my compatriots from Wusih at his home to seek his help and advice on troublesome problems. And he would often be able to settle a dispute or solve a problem with ease and sagacity.

When his 60th birthday came, people of our county decided to show their appreciation by erecting a bridge which spanned the river between Wusih and Yuan Tow Tu, naming it "The Twin Chien Bridge" in honour of the brothers. Although I had no business interest in Wusih, I underwrote one-tenth of the total cost of building the bridge as a token of respect to the Chien twins' integrity and their impeccable morality.

Unfortunately, the currency was depreciating with ruinous rapidity, and when the Chinese Communists overran the country, the bridge was only half built. When the Communists came into power, he was too old to be able to run away. I heard that he was persuaded to serve as a member of the National Political Consultative Assembly and the Deputy Governor of Kiangsu Province. But knowing him, I felt that he would not approve of the activities of the Chinese Communists.

The year before the Great Cultural Revolution, he sent me a collection of his literary manuscripts, which he had written during his lifetime. Reading between the lines of the letter he sent me, I could sense that he was experiencing difficulties. I had originally thought of publishing his manuscripts in Hong Kong, but realising that publication

might involve Mr Chien in various complications, I decided to abandon the idea. Since the Great Cultural Revolution, I have had no further word from him. If he is still living, he would be over eighty years old by now.

Chinese Guerillas in Kaleidoscope

After the Chinese troops fell back from Shanghai, the areas along the Shanghai-Nanking Railway fell successively to the enemy forces. Soon afterwards, guerilla units swept the countryside. Although many of the armed partisan groups were genuine patriotic fighters who were determined to decimate the better-equipped Japanese, there were also others who spent their time plundering the villages and robbing the populace by banding under the false banner of anti-Japanese resistance.

At that time many wealthy families in the countryside were made victims of kidnapping by the pseudo-partisan gangs. I had by that time already achieved some degree of business success and I had become quite well-known in my native village. But I had lived in Shanghai, owned only a modest house in my native village and avoided any trips to the country after the outbreak of the war. As a result, although the bandits masquerading as guerillas were quite determined to get me, they never had a real chance.

But when I went to my office on Chinese New Year day in 1938 I received a letter from the guerilla chief, saying that he needed help in raising military funds, and that unless I paid up, my parents' tombs in the country would be dug up. They had indeed concocted a devilish scheme with which to blackmail me.

I consulted my friends, and we all felt that while it was the son's duty to do everything possible to preserve his ancestors' grave, under the then prevailing chaotic conditions in the countryside, it was difficult to do the proper thing. We felt that if we acted too precipitately, it would only encourage the rascals to strengthen their stranglehold. We felt that it was a bad policy to knuckle under and I decided not to pay up.

Thus I wrote to my distant uncle, Mei Chu, who was then looking after my affairs in the country, saying that if the guerillas wanted to dig up the graves, there was nothing I could do to stop them. But I also said that if by the fourth day of the New Year, the graves had not been dug up, he should, as it was our village's custom, conduct the usual memorial ceremony on the 5th day of the New Year at my parents' tombs and to pay respect on my behalf as a filial son. I learned later that when my letter reached the village, the guerilla band already had a chance of reading the letter at the teahouse. When they saw that I was ready to stand firm, they decided to defer any action.

But several weeks later, another distant female cousin, Ah Pao, sent me a letter from the hamlet of Yenchiatang, where the guerilla chief, Yen Wen-yau, was headquartered, saying that the lawless bands were still determined to dig up my parents' graves. She wrote that Yen was ready to come to Shanghai to negotiate with me, and that if I was willing to pay about *$50,000 the whole matter could be settled amicably. The letter concluded by urging me not to go to the extreme.

In the meantime, not a few people from the country were selling their chickens and stock of rice to raise enough money to pay for their trip to Shanghai. They all seemed to hope that they could make a small fortune in the metropolis. The men sent by the guerilla chief to contact me also arrived. I asked someone to entertain them at dinner at a restaurant which my friends and I owned, Hung Yung Lau.

I did not appear until about 10 o'clock and I started to tell a story casually. I told them that I lost my father when I was 14 years of age, and because the family was very poor, I could only ask a distant great uncle whom we called Grandpa Carpenter to locate a piece of land to bury my father. Grandpa Carpenter was known to have perfected the art of *"feng shui"* – studying the confluence of water and wind to determine whether the site brings good fortune.

Grandpa Carpenter picked the site for my father's grave,

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and indicated that the location would bring good fortune to the descendants.

I told my dinner guests that when I was 21 years of age and returned to my village after my leather handbag business had failed, I overheard while passing the Grandpa Carpenter's shop that he was telling a distant uncle, Yu Chien, and others his ideas about *"feng shui"*. I asked him about the *"feng shui"* of my father's grave, and he said that it was "land's end", meaning that it had the worst possible *"feng shui"*, and would bring the worst possible fortune.

I continued my story for my dinner guests. I told them that I asked Grandpa Carpenter why he once told me it was a lucky site and why he was now saying that it was "land's end." The old man merely said that when I buried my father there was no other land available. I didn't want to argue with him since he was a village elder, although I distinctly remembered that he had said at that time that the grave site was better located than the tombs of my grand-parents. At the time I merely tried to laugh off the matter.

I told my dinner guests that after my business thrived, I also buried my mother at the same graveyard. I bought the adjoining land measuring about one *mou* (one-fourth of an acre) for about *$3,000 and built a low wall around the entire plot, planting a number of trees on the land.

This, I said, was merely my way of showing my deeply-felt sentiments as a filial son. By this time, the villagers began to call this land the "dragon site", the "good fortune land", or "lively land".

The villagers were even saying at that time, I said, that while all the nearby rivers and creeks froze during the winter, the brook which flowed by my parents' burial ground never iced up during the winter. Actually, I had made a careful study of the land, and found that behind the burial plot a hill rose to ward off winds from the northwest, and the brook widened toward the west. Thus during a long period in the winter, the brook was bathed by the sun, with the plateau on

***The value of the dollar then was about $110 an ounce of gold.**

both side always dry, thus helping to keep the sun's warmth and preventing the stream from freezing over.

I told the visitors that I had never believed in *"feng shui"*, and if they were determined to dig up the graves, I would just let events take their natural course. I said that I could, if I wanted to, use some outside influence to stop them, but being also from the same village, I did not wish to do so.

When they heard my recitation, they merely looked at each other, not knowing what to say. I didn't want to push the matter too far, and next day I had planned to invite them to another meal but they wanted to get back. I had *$200 sent around to them as their travelling expenses. One of the group, a Mr Yao, later told me that Yen Wen-yao, the leader, thought that I had been a very good sport. Yen also said that when he returned to the village he would ask Hsu Chu-mei, who was the mastermind of the guerillas behind the grave-digging plot to come to Shanghai to meet me personally so that we could become friends.

Hsu Chu-mei did subsequently make a trip to Shanghai, and I made sure that I did him perfunctory honour. Afterwards, his units were absorbed into the Chinese puppet army, and he took over a rather important military post. But not long afterwards, he died. Yen Wen-yao, according to what I later heard, had taken an assumed name and escaped to Peking after the Chinese Communists took over the mainland. Reports said that he was arrested by the Chinese Communists and put to death. This, by and large, had been the fate of many of the guerillas of that era.

As for myself, I never did put much faith in the belief of *"feng shui"* – the configuration of wind and water at the site of one's house or one's grave to determine the flow of good fortune. I did not think that my subsequent success had anything to do with the outstanding *"feng shui"* of my ancestors' graves.

In fact, I have always thought that graves in China used up too much tillable land, and was thus wasteful. I felt that something should be done to change the old custom. But in

those early days in my native place of Wusih, the belief in *"feng shui"* was widespread. During the war, with the guerillas running rampant and creating unrest throughout the Japanese-held areas, nine out of ten ancestral graves of wealthy families were destroyed. I was exceptionally fortunate in having been able to preserve the burial grounds of my parents.

After the mainland was taken over by the Communists, there was a great movement about six or seven years ago for building "backyard furnaces" for making iron and steel. The brick wall surrounding our family graveyard was taken apart to build the so-called "native furnaces," and the iron gates at the entrance were fed to the furnace.

I sent my Shanghai agent, Mr Tsui, to have the damaged wall and gates repaired. After the restoration, I received pictures to show the extent of the repairs. The Communist authorities had offered to reimburse me for the cost of repairs, but I refused to accept the money.

During the years since, the upheaval of the Great Cultural Revolution had brought country-wide disturbances, and I have no way of knowing how my parents' graveyard had fared during the intervening years.

CHAPTER X

THE DUBIOUS PEACE AND ITS UNCERTAINTIES

勝利後的徬徨

WHEN news of victory reached Shanghai on August 15, 1945, everyone in the city went wild with joy. I took out several cases of rare imported liquor, given to me by friends over the years, and eight or nine urns of superior Shaoshing wine for a gathering of my friends and colleagues to celebrate our National Day on October 10th.

We drank whole-heartedly during the festivities which lasted several days, not only to mark the victory but also to give vent to our feelings which had been suppressed during eight long years of war.

We knew, however, that although victory had been achieved, the military success came mainly from the assistance and support given by the Allies. The end of the war had brought about grave moral as well as physical problems.

During the eight years of war, people living in the occupied areas had undergone a process of degradation. Similarly, people in the areas controlled by the Government had also degenerated, creating a nationwide moral disintegration.

Faced with the moral crisis, the Government had failed to use Draconian measures, which according to age-old Chinese philosophical teachings, were the only practical methods of restoring the rule of law during periods of widespread lawlessness.

Instead of taking decisive measures, the Government was cowered by the popular mounting pressure to make weak and meaningless proclamations of freedom and democracy. The