ROUND TRIP THROUGH EAST ASIA

By KLAUS MEHNERT

There was a time when traveling through areas opened to traffic was so commonplace that accounts of such travels aroused interest at best in one's own family. Those were the days when international travel was almost entirely a matter of money and only remotely one of visas and permits. Things have changed greatly since the beginning of the war. Traveling beyond one's immediate neighborhood is either quite impossible or almost entirely a question of permits, which few are able to get. Transportation is one of the main problems of this war, and the traveler of the twenties and thirties—the tourist who traveled for pleasure and not just to get somewhere—is a thing of the past.

At the same time the war has brought about rapid changes everywhere. Hence traveling has become far more interesting than in normal times, and it may be permissible today to write on a subject which would not have been considered sufficiently important some years ago: a journey through part of East Asia. The following account is a summary of personal impressions and of conversations with leaders and observers of various nationalities during a journey of 5,500 miles through Japan, Manchoukuo, and China; but it should not be regarded as a general analysis, as the time was too short for this.

HOW TO TRAVEL . . .

The first thing a traveler likes to speak about is the business of travel itself. In Japan the effect the war has had on travel is comparatively small. In spite of almost six years of the China Incident and more than a year of the Pacific war, the railways run on time. Yet they are used to maximum capacity. Rarely have I observed heavier traffic anywhere than at present on the Tokaido, Japan's main line. Waiting at a station for one's train, one sees other trains passing at intervals of a few minutes; these are mainly freight trains, of course, consisting of countless cars filled with coal, lumber, machinery, foodstuffs, and many other goods.

So heavy did traffic become owing to the enormously increased demands of total war that certain limitations had to be imposed on passenger traffic. Some trains have been eliminated; on others sleepers have been abolished in order to accommodate more people; and several trains which formerly ran between Tokyo and Kobe now run between Tokyo and Osaka only, which means that one has to travel the last few miles from Osaka to Kobe on a local train. Most trains are very crowded. But apart from such details, which have only affected the convenience, not the essentials, of travel, the transportation system works efficiently and without interruption. The more important trains still have their dining cars, serving the passengers breakfast, lunch, and dinner in three or four shifts each, breakfast costing Yen 0.80 and dinner Yen 1.50.

The facilities on the Nagasaki/Tokyo run have improved. Formerly, when coming from Shanghai, I never succeeded in catching the train in Nagasaki, because the railway station used to be a mile and a half from the pier where the boats from Shanghai berthed. In Moji one had to interrupt the journey in order to cross by steamer from the island of Kyushu to Shimonoseki on the main island of
Japan, where the train trip continued. As a result it usually took three and a half days to get from Shanghai to Tokyo. This time in Nagasaki, however, we stepped right from the boat into the train waiting next to the pier. Moreover, there was no more changing in Moji because a tunnel has conquered the Strait of Shimosenoseki, thus allowing the Fuji Express to run straight from Nagasaki to Tokyo Central Station and reducing the total trip Shanghai/Tokyo to fifty-five hours only. The building of the tunnel—a technical masterpiece—was carried out so quickly and satisfactorily that the Unkaiing of the main island by tunnel to Hokkaido in the north is also being considered now.

Incidentally, the railroads of Manchoukuo under the management of one of the most efficient enterprises in East Asia, the South Manchurian Railway, are as good as in Japan proper.

. . . AND HOW TO MARRY

In one respect travel in Japan has become more difficult for non-Japanese. The names of the stations used to be shown in Japanese and in Latin script. Now all the Latin inscriptions are being eliminated, and if you have not taken the trouble to learn at least the kana script, you have no idea where you are. Some might argue that this is going too far; however, it is a symptom of Japan's profound reaction against all forms of Western influence.

In all spheres of life, the return to what is truly Japanese, or at least East Asiatic, is being preached. I happened, for example, to read the translations of two recent Japanese short stories, both dealing with the question of whether Japanese marriages should be concluded "Western fashion," on the basis of mutual love, or in the traditional Japanese manner.

One of the stories was written by Kan Kikuchi, the other by Fumiko Hayashi, the first being one of the leading authors, the second belonging in the front rank of Japan's women writers. Mr. Kikuchi tells the story of four young sisters of good family. Aya, the first-born and most beautiful, has, under the influence of her American-educated mother, "Western" ideas. Every time she hears of *boishaku*, that is, the arrangement of marriages by matchmakers, she becomes angry. "What nonsense," she says, "to marry a man I have never really met! I must know him for at least two or three months, and then, if he wants me, he must propose to me." While her old-fashioned and physically less attractive sisters all get happily married, Aya, acting like an unmannered flapper from an American movie, is on the way to becoming an old maid. The men resent being treated by her as if they were her toys or being kept waiting an hour and a half at a rendezvous while she is in a beauty parlor. They prefer her sisters. In the end she breaks down and, against her principles, marries a man whom she does not love and hardly knows—not without her mother's urging, who says, with reference to the sisters' successful marriages: "Maybe that's the way men are. If they only have a quick glance, they cannot look through the whole person, and longing and desire lead them on. But in the course of a lengthy acquaintance one eventually finds out everything, and the interest wanes."

In Mrs. Hayashi's story the young girl fares even worse. Yuriko refuses to marry Goro, who has been selected for her by her parents in the orthodox fashion. Instead, and against the will of her parents, she thoughtlessly stumbles into a marriage with a man of her own choice. Her husband leaves her. Her child dies at a premature birth, she herself gets seriously ill and cannot find a job. On her way from bad to worse she meets Goro. He is by now happily married—with his and the bride's parents' consent—and out to buy some ice cream for his young wife who is expecting a baby.

Thus two of the outstanding Japanese writers, in treating the subject of marriage, come to the same conclusion. This is hardly a matter of chance but rather an indication of a general trend of thought. Incidentally, while fully appreciating the intention of the two authors
to warn Japanese youth against moral laxity and liberalism, we might point out
that Aya and Yuriko are adherents of "Western" and "Hollywood" conceptions—two things which are, fortunately, by no means identical. Their irresponsible, pleasure-seeking, selfish attitude is representative, not of the West, but only of some of its decadent tendencies. The real Occident, while leaving more room for the feelings of young people in matters of marriage than Mr. Kikuchi and Mrs. Hayashi seem to advise, would also condemn the Ayas and the Yurikos. It is unfortunate that the West is sometimes judged in the East by its Hollywood exaggerations and caricatures.

CROWDED CAPITAL

Tokyo—including its streetcars—is as overcrowded as all capitals in these days of planning and total war. The more centralized economic life becomes, the larger must grow the governmental machinery in the center, the larger also the influx of people from all over the country to consult the authorities or to plead with them. Furthermore, Tokyo is today not only the capital of Japan but the center of the whole of East Asia. From China and Manchoukuo, from Indo-China, the Philippines, and the East Indies, from Malaya and Burma—officials, businessmen, journalists, and politicians are flocking to the capital in ever-increasing numbers. It was never very easy to get a room in the Imperial Hotel, but now it is extremely difficult, even though new hotels, particularly the huge Dai Iti Hotel, have been built during the last few years. Just as hard as obtaining a room is finding a table at lunch or dinner time. Many people, mostly men from the government offices of the neighborhood, assemble every weekday in front of the various dining and grill rooms of the Imperial Hotel, waiting for the doors to open for lunch or dinner.

THE SUN AND THE MOON

One of the most impressive buildings in the Japanese capital is the Imperial Diet which, after eighteen years of building, was completed in 1936. When I arrived from Shanghai, the present session had just reached the state of interpellations. Japan is a totalitarian state, yet in the Diet each member can get up and put questions to the government. This is one of the many indications of how carefully Japan is proceeding, of how she is avoiding radical changes and breaks. In quick succession the interpellations turned the searchlight of publicity on a large number of outstanding issues and, incidentally, proved that the popular Prime Minister, General Tojo, is not only very capable in his actions, as he has demonstrated in the one and a half years of his premiership, but also in his utterances. He is always quick to find the right word for the members of the Diet and for the nation at large.

One of the Members, Mr. Kita from Ishikawa Prefecture, interpellated General Tojo on the concern felt in some quarters that the Wartime Administration Bill, which was then before the Diet, might result in a dictatorial government as a consequence of the increased powers of the Prime Minister. The General disposed of these anxieties by saying:

In my capacity as His Imperial Majesty's Prime Minister, I am the leader of the nation, but as an individual I am but one of His Imperial Majesty's humble servants. In this respect, I am not a bit different from any of you gentlemen.... The position of Prime Ministership can shine only so far as it reflects the radiance of His Imperial Majesty.... I have my being, therefore, by virtue of the light reflecting His Imperial Majesty's radiance. In this respect I am merely the moon.

After this, no further apprehensions about dictatorship were voiced in the Diet.

On another occasion, the Prime Minister was interpellated regarding the shortcomings of some officials of the government. When he rose in reply he said, "Please do not be too harsh in judging officials. There are fine men among them." Then he related to the Diet a story which he had read that morning in the paper, the story of Mr. Sato, superintendent of education in Nagano Prefecture, and his son Hiroshi. Hiroshi had returned mortally ill from the front some months before. When his illness
reached its final stage, the father spent the entire night at his son's bedside. When morning came, Mr. Sato was to attend a school-directors' conference, and he said to his dying son: "You know, my child, that your father belongs to the State. I am going to the conference." As he left his home, he asked Mrs. Sato not to disturb him during the conference even if their son were to die. When he returned from his work, his son was dead. Mr. Sato kept watch that night, but the next day he went about his daily work again.

This simple story of the quiet, unshakeable sense of duty of Superintendent Sato deeply touched the members of the Diet and, as he finished, General Tojo pressed his handkerchief to his eyes in strong emotion.

In spite of all its interpellations, the Japanese Diet is no debating club. It does its work promptly and efficiently. This could be seen, for instance, when a giant budget, by far the largest in the country's history, surpassing the last peace-time budget by fifteen times, was passed one day by the Diet in the short time between 1.00 and 2.40 p.m.

THE BIG FAMILY

The people of Japan are sacrificing a good deal in comfort and standard of living for the sake of the war. The Japanese merchant marine, big as it is, is occupied largely in taking care of the huge war needs; and the tonnage available for other purposes is, for the time being, not sufficient to ship to Japan the abundance of the southern areas in quantities big enough materially to improve the life of the people. While all Japanese are assured of the absolute necessities of life, they have to get along without many things to which they were used before. The frugality and hardness of the Japanese have now been put to the test. Many houses and government offices were hardly heated this winter, and much time and effort have to be spent on obtaining the family's food. But there is probably no other nation which puts up with the difficulties imposed on it by the war with greater calm and discipline. More than any other people, the Japanese are like one big family. If the father of a true, closely knit family decides temporarily to lower the standard of living of his family in order to save money for an important investment, the family will not grumble but will cheerfully bear the privations as something working for their own good. The same thing can be said about Japan as a whole.

In one important respect no lack can as yet be observed: in human reserves. The number of young men of military age to be seen in civilian clothes in the streets of Japan's cities and villages is amazingly large. Many occupations which, in an emergency, could be easily filled by women are still taken care of by men. Thus Japan, in spite of the requirements of her army and her administration—both extending from the Aleutians to the South Seas—still has plenty of her most precious treasure—man power.

TWO FACTS

The close bonds between the Axis nations have caused them to watch each other's military victories with sincere and proud admiration. And yet it seems to me that none of the triumphs of the German Army in this war has brought the Japanese as close to their allies as the heroic death struggle of the German Sixth Army and its allied units at Stalingrad. I happened to be in Japan when Field Marshal Paulus' last radio report from Stalingrad became known, and I observed the profound sympathy and admiration which it called forth in the Japanese nation.

After four visits to Japan within a year and a half, it seems to me that the Japanese are today more clearly aware of two facts than ever before: first, that they are in the midst of the hardest, most serious and decisive war of their history, and secondly, that Japan and her European Axis friends are bound together inseparably in a life-and-death struggle.
With grim determination the Japanese nation is out to win this war and to pay whatever price this may require.

NEW CAPITAL

It was my first visit to Manchoukuo since 1938, when I had spent two months there on my way from a journalistic assignment in Moscow to one in the USA. The changes are remarkable. From an experiment which had still many signs of being temporary, Manchoukuo has become a success. Hsinking, the capital, has changed from a raw settlement in the midst of a virgin plain to the most modern capital in East Asia, second only to Tokyo. Its government buildings, in which I spent my days interviewing high officials and army officers, rival those of any capital in the world in the beauty and impressiveness of their architecture. At the same time, these buildings are symbolic of the Japanese desire to demonstrate that Japan does not wish to force the Japanese mentality upon the other people of Manchoukuo, but that she desires to bring about a synthesis between what is best in Japanese, Chinese, and Manchu traditions. The imposing buildings of Hsinking are most successful examples of modern Asiatic architecture. In them, Oriental elements have been combined with the latest Western construction methods to form an impressive and harmonious style.

NEW TEMPLES

What the Japanese are striving for in Manchoukuo is a synthesis of more than just architectural styles. On a walk in the environs of Hsinking I was taken to a newly completed temple. The magnificent compound is built in the style of the great Chinese buildings of the past, more imposing than any of the new temples in China proper. But the services held there in honor of those who fell for Manchoukuo follow the rites of Shinto, the State religion of Japan.

Now that the one-sided materialism of the nineteenth century has been left behind and the significance of the world of ideas rediscovered, our attention is especially directed at developments which take place in the realm of ideas and ideals. Hence it is interesting to observe the development of the ideological relations between Manchoukuo and Japan.

In 1935 the Emperor of Manchoukuo visited Japan and was welcomed in the Imperial family. The Empress Dowager composed two poems for the guest from Manchoukuo. One mentioned that the Emperor of Manchoukuo looked upon her as his own mother, while the other read:

Propitious does our spring garden appear Where I feel a young pine tree is added to the landscape.

Upon his return to Hsinking the Emperor declared: "The Tenno of Nippon and I, we are as one in spirit." A few years later, after having visited Japan to celebrate the 2,600th anniversary of her foundation, he enshrined Amaterasu, the supreme Japanese deity, who is also the ancestress of the Japanese Imperial House, in the inner court of his Imperial Palace, declaring that the development of Manchoukuo was due to the divine protection of this deity and, a year ago, on the 10th anniversary of the founding of Manchoukuo, he called Japan for the first time not a "friendly nation" but a "progenitor-nation," thereby acknowledging Manchoukuo as an "offspring-nation." This caused Mr. Fujisawa, one of the most original ideologists of present-day Japan, to make the following comment:

The concept of the "progenitor-nation" must underlie the new international law to be applied to all peoples of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. The Emperor of Manchoukuo has clearly visualized that it was Nippon, the "progenitor-nation," which procreated Manchoukuo as an "offspring-land" or a "branch-land" and that there should be observed strictly the virtue of filial piety between them. Externally, parents and children are separate personalities but internally they are, so to speak, one inseparable being. An extension of this novel idea to the international relations constitutes the prerequisite to the formulation of a new law of nations destined to liquidate the modern international law which had already ceased to exert authority in Greater East Asia.

Incidentally, Mr. Fujisawa envisages the same development for other parts of East Asia too:

The road the Nanking Government is earnestly advised to tread in the near future should be this:
to erect also a Holy Shrine for the worship of the Sun Goddess and adopt the Way of the Gods as the political and spiritual principle for reenact China. It is only when Nippon, Manchoukuo, and China venerate one and the same Grand Sun Deity that one perfect family community will be created out of these three Oriental countries.

The fusion of East Asia, not only on the economic and political plane, but also in a common veneration of the same deity—that is the interesting goal which some Japanese such as Mr. Fujisawa have in mind.

HARNESSSED RIVERS

For the last few years the Manchoukuo Government has been reticent in its public announcements of the detailed results of the country’s economic growth. But the impressions which the observer gains are good and certainly surpass by far anything ever expected by American and British students of Manchoukuo affairs. Within eleven years, Manchoukuo, from a rather backward supplier of raw materials, has become one of the industrial centers of East Asia, with highly developed and specialized industries, including aircraft and automobile plants. In order to utilize the huge water power of the country, for example, Manchoukuo has in recent years harnessed both the Sungari and the Yalu Rivers by means of dams and power plants. Two of the dams already finished dwarf the once much-publicized dam which the Soviets had built on the Dniepr and are among the three or four largest dams in the world.

Another example: until a few years ago, the city of Mukden stretched only to the east of the railroad track, while on the other side there was nothing but fields and prairie. But when some friends took me the other day in their car to this district, called Tiehai, I found one of the most modern industrial areas I have seen anywhere in the East. We first drove several miles in one direction, then several miles in the other, yet the picture did not change: blocks and blocks and blocks of factories built of red brick.

Incidentally, Manchoukuo is an encouraging example of economic co-opera-

tion between East Asia and Europe. Germany, in particular, can be proud of the constructive role which the products of her industries at home and the sincere efforts of her representatives on the spot have played in the industrial growth of the country.

Manchoukuo is among the three or four countries in the world with the richest experience in planned economy—one of the outstanding issues of our time. Much has been achieved, but many difficulties are still to be solved, for instance in agriculture. The problem is how to keep down the prices of agricultural products, especially soya, and yet keep the peasant interested in his work in the face of increased prices of manufactured goods. The solution being tried out at present allows the peasants a certain amount of manufactured goods at reduced prices in exchange for their products. The first results of this new policy have been promising. It might help to overcome the stagnation in farm production noticeable during the last years.

SCHOOL FOR LEADERS

One of the chief assets of Manchoukuo and to my mind one of her main attractions is the large number of exceptionally able men to be found in her political and economic life. This country, with its great possibilities, still only in the beginning of its growth, has attracted many men of the pioneer type. Quite a few of the leaders of present-day Japan, including Prime Minister Tojo, have won their spurs there.

This is what one of Manchoukuo’s leaders, Mr. Takasaki, the outstanding industrialist of the country, told me about his thoughts regarding its future:

The economic blocs in the world after the war will be the Greater East Asia bloc led by Japan, the European economic bloc led by Germany and Italy, and the American one led by the United States. Among these economic blocs, it will be Russia’s and England’s lot to retain only remnants of their former possessions. Under these circumstances, Manchoukuo will play an important role as the supplier of foodstuffs, iron, coal, and other raw materials to Japan, and at the same time of soybeans and other goods to Europe. In return, Manchoukuo will be supplied with machinery and
The National Heroes' Shrine in Hsinking, a Shinto shrine of Chinese architecture recently built to the memory of those who gave their lives for Manchoukuo

THE NEW CAPITAL

A youth demonstration and parades on one of Hsinking's modern squares
Supreme Court Building in Hsinking, a fine example of the new architectural style developed in Manchoukuo

A glimpse of one of the busy modern steel works in Manchoukuo
tropical raw materials from the Greater East Asia bloc and also from Europe.

At present, all the countries of the world are suffering from a lack of goods and man power. The laborers of Manchuria, however, being Chinese, are more industrious and willing to serve than any other people. They are able to do the same work all day long, never getting tired and applying themselves to it with all their strength. Their training in modern industry will give them the leading place among the laborers of the Greater East Asia bloc. Manchoukuo, which is completely safeguarded by the Kwantung Army, is receiving a constant influx of laborers from Central and North China, and it is one of Manchoukuo's great tasks to supply these laborers with food and clothing and to train them to be efficient workers in modern industrial plants.

THE KWANTUNG ARMY

The Japanese forces known as the Kwantung Army, which guarantee Manchoukuo's security, make an impression of great efficiency. It was still winter in Manchoukuo when I was there, and bitterly cold. Everything was frozen hard, though the sun shone from a clear sky. But the soldiers of the Kwantung Army have become used to the climate of northern Asia in many years of service. The officers in particular look like real warriors, and in describing one I am describing most of them. One day I had an hour's interview with one of the members of the Kwantung Army's staff. Motionless and seemingly emotionless he sat in his chair, speaking with a calm, even voice, as if he were discussing matters which didn't concern him in the least. And yet there was no mistaking: he was as tense as a tightly drawn bow string just before the release of the arrow, as tense as a clenched fist with all muscles strained, not moving, but ready. This faculty of extreme inner concentration coupled with seeming equanimity is perhaps Japan's greatest strength; and her ability to change from utter repose to extreme activity reminds one of Japan's volcanoes, which can also switch suddenly from dreamy calm to terrific eruptions.

The officer's views on military and political questions were clear and very intelligent. When the conversation touched this winter's warfare in Europe, he said: "We Nipponese officers judge the German military strength, not by the day-to-day events on the front, but by our unshakeable confidence in the inexhaustible strength of the German nation and in the final victory of the German armies."

TWO-LANGUAGE ANTHEM

Perhaps the most important change I noticed between the Manchoukuo of 1936 and that of 1943 lies in the relationship between the Japanese and the Chinese there. To a serious observer there can hardly be any question that these two races living in Manchoukuo are getting more and more used to each other, and that their collaboration today is considerably better than it was seven years ago. Chinese and Japanese are working side by side, they are learning each other's languages, and their children play together. The Chinese now seem to look at Manchoukuo no longer as something temporary which they can afford to ignore but rather as something permanent. From the moment they came to this conclusion there was but one short step to the next: to the realization that, if Manchoukuo is to stay, it is in the interest of the Chinese themselves to make Manchoukuo as quickly as they can as good a place to live in as possible.

This growing collaboration between the Chinese and the Japanese in Manchoukuo has found unique expression in the country's new national anthem. For the first time in history, a national anthem has been written in such a way that it can be sung simultaneously in two languages. To listen to masses of Japanese and Chinese singing the anthem in their respective languages so that it makes, not for confusion, but for harmony, causes one to believe in the future of this country.

MING GRAVES—PAST AND FUTURE

"Nobody goes to the Ming graves nowadays," they said in Peking.

We went anyway. I do not know what hidden dangers there may have been. But what we saw with our eyes was pictures of peace. The roads were better than they had been when I went there for the first time in the twenties;
the Chinese policemen in the villages looked more efficient; and after leaving the Summer Palace there was not a single soldier to be seen. The season required little work in the fields, so that the peasants were sitting in the kindly March sun in front of their houses, smoking their small-bowed pipes, while women with infants in their arms leaned in the doorways, and children and dogs played in the dusty streets.

The Ming graves are perhaps the most magnificent imperial burial grounds in the world. Sheltered by the semicircle of a picturesque ridge which looks like the mountains on Chinese paintings, thirteen emperors slumber in mighty tree-covered mounds behind gates and temples of classical beauty, with deep red walls and golden-tiled roofs.

As we walked through these monuments of Chinese history, the children from the village near by began to gather to look at the once familiar and now rare sight of a private car. By the time we left, more than a hundred of them were standing, shy, friendly, and curious, around the automobile. War or peace—the Chinese birth rate is high, and this mass of children against the proud background of Emperor Yung Lo's mausoleum was a symbol both of China's past and future.

**Frescoes and Flags**

Another day we drove to Fa Hai Ssu, a charming little temple nesting on the slopes of a valley in the Western Hills and famed for its remarkable frescoes. Again the impression of the trip was a combination of the old and the new. On the one side the venerable temple with its timeless peace and remoteness, and close by, clearly visible from the temple, a large electric power plant going full blast and enveloped in the smoke of tall chimneys.

Even Peking, more than any other great city a place of the past, has its foot in the present age. To be sure, the Altar of Heaven and the Forbidden City still look the way they always did, although perhaps they will not do so much longer, since it has been announced that part of the grounds of the Altar of Heaven is to be transformed into farm land. But numerous posters (such as one showing a Chinese and a Japanese soldier fighting side by side) and large models of aerial bombs at traffic centers remind the Pekingese that they, too, are not entirely out of the world; and thousands of Chinese flags lined the streets on the eighth of the month, the day on which the entry of Japan into the war with the Anglo-American powers is commemorated.

Every time I was in Peking the official flag of the country was different. During my first visit, the flag of the Chinese Republic, which had replaced the Manchu Dynasty, consisted of five bars (red for the Chinese, yellow for the Manchus, blue for the Mongolians, white for the Mohammedans, and black for the Tibetans). Next, in the late twenties, with the victory of the Nanking Government, came the flag of the Kuomintang (a blue rectangle with a white star, the rectangle in the upper inner corner of a red field). When the Japanese armies occupied North China in their struggle against Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang flag was discarded in favor of the former five stripes; and on February 9, 1943, one month after the new Nanking Government had joined Japan in her declaration of war against Great Britain and the USA, the Kuomintang flag, which has by now become the emblem of the National Government of Wang Ching-wei, came back once more.

A rickshaw ride through the streets of Peking is both restful and stimulating. The streets are broad and straight. Gates and walls, palaces and mud houses, stream past on either side. They all blend into an impressive harmony, and yet one is aware of riding in the shadow of many different centuries and dynasties. And one becomes so history-conscious that one cannot but include the changing flags into the rhythm of past and present. The East is great in symbolism, and the present change of flags shows that North China is passing through a new stage.
MOMENTOUS CHANGE

When the Nanking Government declared war on Great Britain and the United States, many observers throughout the world were inclined to take this as a gesture without practical meaning. More than two months have elapsed since then, and they have demonstrated that this step was important, if not yet in the military, at least in the political field. By entering into an active alliance with Japan, the National Government has made China into a full-fledged partner in the great struggle. From the status of an occupied territory, North China is changing into a trusted ally which is doing its share in the war of its own free will. Consequently, Japanese advisers are being recalled in increasing numbers from the positions they have held in the administration and in economic life during the past few years. The outstanding political organization of North China is its sole party, the Hsin Min Hui. Most of its Japanese advisers, formerly several thousands of them, are being withdrawn. Similar changes have been announced for other fields.

Already the results of this new Japanese policy are being felt. On my first night in Peking, I was asked to attend a large, festive dinner given by Mr. Chu Shen, the new head of the government of North China (the "North China Political Affairs Commission") and concurrently the president of the Hsin Min Hui. This dinner was given to a hundred or so Chinese newspaper men from all over North China who were meeting in the city to consider the new situation. Mr. Chu Shen's message to the gathering aptly expressed the attitude of the Chinese leaders after China's entry into the war:

"The national reconstruction of China depends on the outcome of the present war," Mr. Chu Shen emphatically declared. "Her national salvation can be achieved only through her own strenuous efforts." He urged the men of the press to advocate the increase of production in North China and the extensive supply of important materials for the prosecution of the war. "Only through this process," he added, "can the Chinese hope to attain the independence of their country."

China's active participation in the war in return for her growing independence—this is the direction in which events in North China seem to be moving today. There are still difficulties ahead on this road; yet the very fact that it is being tried seems to fill the Chinese with new confidence in their future and with the determination to overcome as quickly and efficiently as possible their present economic difficulties. People usually work best when they feel that they will share in the fruits of their efforts. This feeling has been considerably strengthened by the events of the past few weeks.

Hand in hand with the increased participation of North China in the war against the Anglo-American nations goes the growing collaboration between Nanking and Peking, for which the change in flags is only one of many symptoms.

The Sino-Japanese relations in North China have entered a new and hopeful phase—this is the most important impression gained by a visit to North China in March 1943.