

MEETING THE JAPANESE

Two English Writers Report

W. H. AUDEN & CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

IF YOU have just spent four months in the interior of wartime China, visited two fronts, a dozen military hospitals, and the sites of many air-raids, it becomes difficult to remember that you are supposed to be an impartial neutral, whose country maintains "friendly diplomatic relations" with each of the two belligerent governments. For us, in Canton, in Hankow, along the Yellow River, the Japanese were "the enemy"; the Chinese anti-aircraft were "our" guns, the Chinese planes "our" planes, the Chinese army was "we." Most of the foreigners in China feel that way nowadays, even the officials.

In the course of our travels, we had met only two Japanese. One of them was sitting in the corner of a railway carriage on the Lung-Hai line, tied up with rope like a parcel, surrounded by his guards. He had been captured somewhere near the Grand Canal, and was being taken down to Hankow to be questioned by the authorities. Prisoners in this war are a kind of zoological rarity; we gaped at this one with furtive and somewhat shame-faced curiosity—a sheepish, moon-faced youth, who spoke neither Chinese nor English, as isolated in his captivity as a baby panda. There was nothing we could do for him, except to put a cigarette between his lips, and go away as soon as was decently possible. The other Japanese was also a prisoner. We were taken to see him on our way up to the Southeastern front. He was tall and handsome, with a large mustache and considerable dignity. He had been a schoolmaster before the war, and one felt that he was not sorry to be out of it. The Chinese journalists who accompanied us were impressed chiefly by his size. As one of them ambiguously remarked: "He must be the Longfellow of Japan."

It seemed strange and unnatural, therefore, to be sitting down to lunch with four Japanese civilians in the dining-room of the Shanghai Club. The four Japanese were all distinguished personages, a consular official, a business man, a banker, and a railway director; they gave us the collective impression of being stumpy, dark brown, bespectacled, mustached, grinning, and very neat. We had resolved, of course, to be extremely tactful. To make any reference, however indirect, to the war would, we felt, be positively indecent.

But the Japanese, evidently, had no such qualms. "You have been traveling in China?" said one of them, right away. "How interesting. . . . I hope you had no inconvenience?" "Only from your airplanes," we replied, for-

getting our resolutions. The Japanese laughed heartily; this was a great joke. "But surely," they persisted, "you must have found transport and living conditions very primitive, very inefficient?" "On the contrary," we assured them, "extremely efficient. Kindness and politeness everywhere. Everybody was charming." "Oh yes," the consular official agreed, in an indulgent tone. "The Chinese are certainly charming. Such nice people. What a pity. . . ." "Yes, what a pity!" the others chimed in. "This war could so easily have been avoided. Our demands were very reasonable. In the past, we were always able to negotiate these problems amicably. The statesmen of the old school—you could deal with them, they understood the art of compromise. But these younger men, they're dreadfully hot-headed. Most unfortunate. . . ." "You know," continued the consular official, "we really love the Chinese. That is the nice thing about this war. There is no bitterness. We in Japan feel absolutely no bitterness towards the Chinese people." This was really a little too much; the last remnants of our prearranged politeness disappeared. It was hardly surprising, we retorted, with some heat, that the Japanese didn't feel bitter. Why should they? Had they ever had their towns burnt and their crops destroyed? Had they ever been bombed? Our four gentlemen had no answer ready. They merely blinked. They didn't appear in the least offended. Then one of them said, "That is certainly a most interesting point of view."

They wanted to know about the morale in Hankow. Was there much enthusiasm? What possibility was there of a negotiated peace? None, we declared, with spiteful relish. Chiang would continue to resist—if necessary, to the borders of Thibet. They shook their heads sadly, and drew in their breath with a sharp, disappointed hiss. It was a pity. . . . a great pity. . . . And then—we had been expecting it—out came the Bolshevik bogey. Japan was really fighting on China's side, to save her from herself, to protect her from the Soviets. "And from Western trade competition," we might have added, but it

wasn't necessary. For, at this moment, through the window which overlooked the river, the gun turrets of *H.M.S. Birmingham* slid quietly into view, moving upstream. In Shanghai, the visual statements of power politics are more brutal than any words.

Like formidable, excluded watchdogs, the real masters of Shanghai inhabit the dark, deserted Japanese Concession or roam the ruined wilderness of Chapei, looking hungrily in upon the lighted populous international town. On Garden Bridge, their surly sentries force every Chinese foot passenger to raise his hat in salute. Incidents are of almost weekly occurrence: a foreign lady is insulted, an innocent naturalist is arrested as a spy. Representations are made — "through the proper channels"; apologies are gravely offered and accepted. Out driving one day, in a district occupied by the Japanese, we saw two soldiers with drawn bayonets prodding at a crowd of women and children. We stopped. Here, we thought, is a chance of witnessing an atrocity at first-hand. Then we noticed a third soldier, with a basket. The Japanese were—distributing food.

On the voyage home, we stopped at Nagasaki for a few hours, and later had time for one night in Tokyo before rejoining our boat at Yokohama. There are few signs of the war here, beyond the posters which advertise heroic military films. In the streets of the towns we passed through, there were still plenty of able-bodied young men in civilian clothes. Many of the public lamps of Kobe are not lit at night—a precaution, we were told, against air-raids—but the shops shine brightly enough to illuminate the entire city. As we entered the Tokyo station, a troop-train was leaving for China, amidst cheering and waving banners. As far as we could judge, the enthusiasm wasn't being produced to order.

Some Chinese believe that Japan is tired of this war. We wish we could agree with them. Ten Japanese soldiers have committed suicide. No doubt. But suicide proves nothing. It is the national reaction to all life's troubles: an officer's reprimand, a love affair gone wrong, a quarrel, a snub. Twenty Japs were seen by a peasant, sitting round a fire in a wood: "they looked very sad, and one of them said, 'I am tired of this war.'" No doubt. Were there ever any soldiers, anywhere, who didn't grumble, since the days of Julius Caesar? No, Japan isn't tired of this war. Not yet. She won't be tired until the steadily approaching economic crisis is upon her, until the Chinese make some effective air-raids on her munitions factories, until she has been forced to call another million men to the colors. She won't be tired until the fall of Hankow (if Hankow does fall) proves to her—as we hope and think it will—that you cannot beat China merely by occupying her cities. For we believe that China can be beaten only when her morale and newly found unity have been broken, and that is a task which all the robber nations of the earth, banded together, might well fail to accomplish.



Hayden
Hayden

COUNT KABAYAMA'S MISSION

The Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai Invades New York

THEODORE DRAPER

COUNT KABAYAMA came to New York last month virtually unheralded. Very shortly, he rented four large rooms, 10,000 cubic feet of office space, in the International Building, Rockefeller Center. In charge of his headquarters he appointed a former feature writer of the Tokyo *Asahi*, the big Japanese daily, by name T. Maida. His staff will be partly American, but the Japanese members will know how to tell funny stories in the American language with almost equal fluency. He is in no hurry to begin his job, because he knows that plenty of preparation is necessary, plenty of mistakes have been made, plenty of money has been wasted. He doesn't want any publicity, just yet. October will be time enough for the interviews, statements, announcements, parties, lectures, private showings of art, books, films.

In October, Count Kabayama's Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, meaning the Society for International Cultural Relations, will make its first public appearance in the United States. About the same time, other branches will open for business in London, Paris, Rome, Berlin, and elsewhere. For very good reason, Count Kabayama chose to come here himself and chose New York instead of Washington.

Count Ayské Kabayama is chairman of the board of directors of the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai. H. I. H. Prince Takamatsu, brother of the Emperor of Japan, is its president of honor. Prince, now Premier, Konoye is its president. Marquis Tokugawa and Baron Goh, its vice-presidents, are probably the highest peers in Japan. Its board of directors contains the richest financiers, the best-known educators, and the most important politicians. Everything about it is intended to convey an impression of prestige and power.

The society was founded in April 1934. That is all that ever happened to it until May of this year. When General Ugaki came into the reorganized Konoye ministry as the new Foreign Minister, the society assumed sudden importance. On May 30 and 31, the Tokyo *Asahi* published long articles about its new role as Japan's major medium of propaganda abroad. The articles told of the appointment of "cultural attachés," endowed with the status of counsellors or first secretaries of the various embassies. This will be the first attempt of its kind by the Foreign Office.

Of course, the true objective of the society has but passing relation to its name. The Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai is from every as-

pect a propaganda organization, was never meant to be anything else. Those who bother to look up its original prospectus, obligingly published in an English version in Tokyo, will find the following: "Besides political and economic contacts, the feelings of one people towards another, their relations in art and science, the promotion of mutual knowledge through the medium of the screen, the cultivation of friendship by means of sport—all these and other factors exert on international relations an influence which, with the continuous development of means of communication, ever continues to increase in force and importance."

Admittedly wordy, but reasonably clear. The Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai will try to exert an influence on foreign relations and its branch here will try to mold American foreign policy. It will do so through indirect, well disguised channels, in the name of science, art, films, even sport. The society's published "Scheme of Activities" is very concrete and provides for a many-sided organization: a clearing-house for the "writing, compilation, translation, and publication of various works"; sponsor of exchange professors and students, lectures, exhibitions, concerts; tourist agency for businessmen, scholars, journalists, artists, and politicians.

Nine months ago, the Japanese government banned all American films. The prohibition has just been lifted for two reasons. First, the government does not want to put any

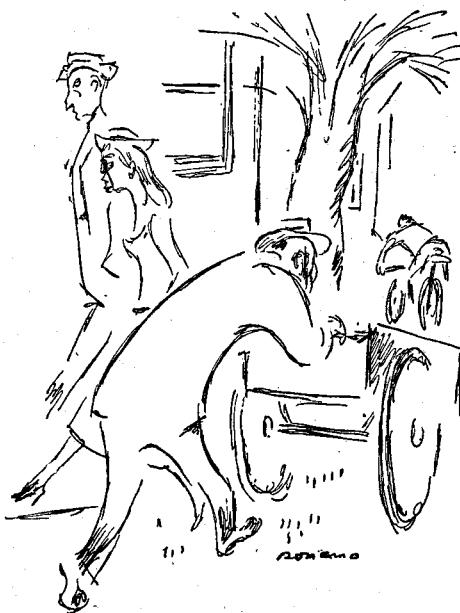
obstacles in Count Kabayama's path here. Second, it wants to exhibit a number of propaganda pictures in the United States, among them a recently completed film entitled *The Way to Oriental Peace* with a number of Chinese actors imported into Japan from Peiping. A German director, W. Loe-Bagier, is going to produce two films, *The People's Pledge* and *The Sacred Goal* for the Japanese in the next few months. Count Kabayama's organization will sponsor the pictures here.

The Japanese have already spent an enormous sum of money to sway American public opinion. Most of it has been wasted. The biggest pro-Japanese stunt, Ambassador Saito's radio talk on a sponsored program, proved a boomerang. It made the State Department angry and the sponsor had to promise to behave. But the Japanese recognize that a major propaganda effort is now necessary in Britain and America. Their outlook is something like this.

Unless Hankow falls by autumn, their war is lost by any calculation. But their problems will still be enormous even assuming Hankow's capture. Their economic deterioration has reached the critical stage and the recent break on the Tokyo stock market was but one alarming symptom of a basic weakness. Japan must borrow large sums from Britain and the United States if it is to hold off an economic break-down. Britain has already given Japan considerable financial assistance. In exchange for an agreement over the Shanghai customs, the London "City" has helped to keep the value of the yen from disappearing.

But there is even more money loose in Wall Street—that is why Count Kabayama chose New York and not Washington. The Japanese expect to bring forward the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai just about the time Hankow is scheduled, in their plans, to fall. The organization will try to sell Americans, especially investors, the idea that Manchukuo, and North and Central China are good investments as long as Japan keeps control. The theory is that Americans friendly to Japan are likely to lend her money.

Japan, in this war, does not have the sympathy of the overwhelming majority of Americans. The front page of every newspaper carries more and better "propaganda" for China than the smartest scheme of any paid public-relations counsel. China's propaganda problem has been to broadcast the truth, Japan's to hide it. It is impossible for Japan to make a direct appeal for desperately-needed funds on the basis of its political activity. Its course must be devious and indirect. It must obscure the issues at stake in the valley of the Yangtze by pleasant, irrelevant niceties about Japanese art, books, and culture. Count Kabayama was chosen because Count Kabayama knows how. In the words of the *China Weekly Review*, he "has been a professional glad-hander and dispenser of culture to overseas visitors in the Nippon capital for many years."



Soriano