

ACKERMAN CENTER PODCAST

Season 2: A Year in the Third Reich

Primary Sources

anchor.fm/ackermancenter

The Ackerman
Center Podcast



Spotify
Listen on
Apple Podcasts
@holocaustpodcast

EPISODE 5: 1937

The Pacific War: The Rape of Nanking

"A Doomed Capital." *Times*, 8 Dec. 1937, p. 17. The Times Digital Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS285553032/TTDA?u=txshracd2602&sid=TTDA&xid=ff413e1b.

A DOOMED CAPITAL

The streets of Tokyo are full of lights and triumph. The streets of Nanking, flame-lit, are full of death and fear and destitution. The Japanese forces, converging on the apex of the Yangtze salient, have met with little serious resistance before the Chinese capital; and the issue of the struggle now proceeding under its walls can hardly be in doubt. The full story of the Chinese collapse is not yet known. The ordeal to which the defenders of Shanghai were subjected before they were dislodged was as severe as any troops have ever had to undergo, and they seem to have had little stomach and little ammunition left for further fighting. The fresh drafts brought up to defend Nanking were mostly raw material from the farther provinces and gave a poor account of themselves. Several successive lines of "impregnable" (but possibly imaginary) fortifications failed to check the impetus of the invaders; and intensive bombing—culminating yesterday in a ruthless onslaught on Pukow, which was crowded with refugees—hastened the tempo of the retreat. Another contributory cause of the *débâcle* may well have been the conviction—unavowed, perhaps, at headquarters, but almost certainly shared throughout the Chinese ranks—that it was not only impossible to hold Nanking but dangerous to try to do so.

GENERAL CHIANG KAI-SHEK stayed on in the capital until the situation was clearly hopeless. He left by air yesterday for a destination which is understood to have been Nanchang, in Kiangsi, a city which for several years served as the base for his military campaigns against the Communists. He could perhaps have saved Nanking by suing for peace, though it is true that the Japanese place a considerable symbolic value on its fall. His attitude, however, has shown none of those signs of weakening which Tokyo would give a good deal to be able to discern. There are now two courses open to him, both almost equally unattractive. He can make overtures which would lead, after a good deal of one-sided bargaining, to an armistice. The adverse effect of such a step on his own political position would be serious, but it would now be mitigated by certain not unimportant factors. One of these is the condition of his best troops, who have every excuse for war-weariness. Another is the argument, which he could easily and perhaps persuasively advance, that, though Japan will drive a hard bargain to-day, she would drive a still harder one to-morrow, when she has advanced even deeper into China; and that it is therefore in China's interest to come to terms as quickly as possible. There is a good deal to be said for this policy; but it seems doubtful whether GENERAL CHIANG is the man to say it. Like all Chinese, he looks forward through future generations to the ultimate day of China's liberation from Japan; and he is probably in some degree moved by the knowledge that to call off the present struggle before all is lost would be to found the wrong kind of tradition for future resistance. He is a dour man at all times, and now he is a desperate one. Left to himself, he is unlikely to seek a humiliating peace while China can still offer at any rate the show of violence

The alternative before him is to prolong the war. In contemplating this he can draw a few moderately reassuring conclusions from the situation in North China, where for some weeks now the Japanese troops have been almost entirely inactive on the various fronts. Behind these fronts they appear to have had their hands full with mopping-up operations and with political and economic reorganization of the areas overrun. In this category the tasks before them are formidable, and will not become any less so if the army takes on further territorial commitments, as it must if the war goes on and Japan goes on winning it. After his experience at Nanking GENERAL CHIANG probably finds it difficult to put his finger on a Verdun in the interior and to say with conviction: "There we shall hold them." But he knows that the Japanese regard with uneasiness the prolongation of hostilities and are reluctant to increase indefinitely the responsibilities of conquest. There has been a lull in the North; and now there must be a pause at Nanking while the Japanese clean up the area partially and rapidly covered by their advance on the capital. It is therefore possible to visualize—as perhaps CHIANG does—an invasion which will progress by a series of jerks, and in which the pauses between the jerks will grow progressively longer as the fighting drifts deeper into the interior. No one knows better than the GENERALISSIMO and his colleagues how difficult the Chinese are to rule, particularly in areas lately swept by warfare in one form or another. Every retreat, however humiliating its strategic implications, leaves the victor with a legacy of distress and lawlessness, both exacerbated by outraged nationalism. From the Chinese point of view the Japanese front is less important than the Japanese rear. Here, it is true, the invader is not menaced by some grave and possibly decisive danger; but he has a thousand petty problems, military and administrative, to cope with, a thousand expenses—not all of them petty—to incur. Japan can do it; perhaps she can go on doing it as long as she wishes. But there is a chance that she cannot, that the strain will become so severe that a period of (at the least) stalemate may ensue, bringing with it an atmosphere in which China could open negotiations without

loss of prestige. It is admittedly a slender chance; but perhaps in the Chinese view it is worth a rearguard action.

The indications are that Japan does not know what she wants. China in the near future will be divided into two parts. One will be ruled by the Chinese, the other by the Japanese through Chinese puppets. Both forms of administration offer acute perplexities to Japan. Does she want to break CHIANG'S power, in which case the provinces outside Japan's sphere will almost certainly become a political chaos with the Communists in the ascendant? Or does she hope for a chastened Central Government, which would give her only a short period of lip-service before once more offending as the Nanking Administration offended? She will, no doubt, contrive to weather the difficulties before her for a time; but her long-term prospects in China are not reassuring.

ACKERMAN CENTER PODCAST

Season 2: *A Year in the Third Reich*

Primary Sources

anchor.fm/ackermancenter

**The Ackerman
Center Podcast**



Spotify
Listen on
Apple Podcasts
@holocaustpodcast

EPISODE 5: 1937

The Pacific War: The Rape of Nanking



"At the headquarters of the Nanking Safety Zone Committee.

Left to right: Mr. Zial (Russian Tartar); Mr. Hatz (Austrian); Mr. Rabe (German, Chairman of the Safety Zone Committee); Rev. John Magee (American Church Mission); Mr. Cola Podshivaloff (White Russian) December 13, 1937. Source: Yale University Library: Divinity School: The Nanking Massacre Project: Photographs and Films. YDS-RG008-265-002-009



Ruins of destroyed buildings after air raid by the Nazi "Condor Legion" unit, Guernica, Spain 1937. Source: Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst - Zentralbild (Bild 183-H25224)

<https://anchor.fm/ackermancenter>

<https://ackerman.utdallas.edu/virtual-outreach/>