

# Remembering the rape of Nanking

The poet Auden wrote: "Where life is evil now:/ Nanking; Dachau." Preoccupied by Dachau, we have forgotten the more remote horrors of Nanking. Most people did not even notice that this past week marked the 40th anniversary of the end of a largely forgotten part of World War II — the bloody struggle between China and Japan.

On July 7, 1937 the Japanese Imperial Army began its long-planned invasion of China. Using the pretext of a skirmish at Peking's Marco Polo Bridge, Japan embarked on an eight-year war against China: Its aim was to annex all of China and southeast Asia, using the conquered regions to supply raw materials, fuel and slave labor to Japanese industry.

Imperial Japanese armies moved relentlessly southward from Manchuria and westward from the coast. China, defended by a hopelessly weak collage of Kuomintang forces under Chiang Kai Shek, communists and regional warlords, could not long oppose the well-equipped Japanese armies.

By Dec. 13 the Japanese entered the ancient walled capital of China's south, Nanking. The great city, a repository of art treasures and libraries, was given over to pillage. Tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers were allowed — even encouraged, to run amok for seven terrifying weeks, looting, killing and burning.

Chinese civilians of all ages were used for bayonet and hand grenade practice; they were burned with industrial acid by the Japanese, roasted over fires and gassed. Two thousand were buried alive. Firing squads worked day and night.

But the greatest horror was rape. As a final, devas-



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Then, at a remote mountain pass in Shansi called Pingsing, elements of the communist Eighth Route Army under Chu Teh and Lin Piao, ambushed the Japanese. For the first time the mighty Imperial Army was defeated by Chinese troops. From that day onward, China's vast armies moved relentlessly toward final victory.

Eight years of seesaw fighting ensued; bloody years that saw the Japanese slowly driven back. Opium-eating warlords and Kuomintang generals fought the communists as mightily as they fought the Japanese; Claire Chennault and his Flying Tigers blasted Japanese Zeros out of the China sky. China's soldiers, often dressed in rags and poorly armed, but possessed of indomitable courage, finally overcame Japan's finest field armies.

The arrogant Japanese simply could not hope to occupy China: Like Russia, its distances were too great, communications rudimentary and enemy numbers inexhaustible. To garrison China and Indochina, to attempt the invasion of British India and, at the same time, to fight the U.S. in the Pacific was madness brought on by delusions of grandeur and racial superiority.

In the end, the Japanese were driven out. Twenty million Chinese died at the hands of Japan. The war's shock jolted feudal China into the modern age, opening the way for the gathering storm of the communist revolution. Remembering Nanking, where the Japanese troops turned into wild beasts, it is not surprising that the fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, each of which suffered less than half those killed at Nanking, is not remembered today in China with any particular grief.

tating humiliation to the Chinese, drunken Japanese soldiers were allowed to rape anyone they could catch. Females from 6 to 80 were raped, often day after day, and some as many as 40 times in a single night. No one had seen such a horror, or such barbarism, since the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.

At one point, it is reported, a German donned his Nazi armband and used its influence to save Chinese civilians from being raped and shot by Japanese soldiers. Such was the hierarchy of evil in Nanking.

When it was all over, some 300,000 Chinese had died in Nanking. Later, Japanese were to claim their army had become "undisciplined." The truth was that Japan pursued a policy of calculated terror and humiliation designed to forever crush Chinese opposition to the new master race.

Japan's armies then marched down China's river valleys until they reached the jungled uplands of Burma. In doing so, they became overextended and unable to guard their vulnerable supply lines against mounting attacks by guerrillas or Chinese regulars.