

# The War Behind the War

THE VIGIL OF A NATION. By Lin Yutang. New York: The John Day Co. 1945. 256 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by HARRISON FORMAN

PHILOSOPHER LIN YUTANG begins his "The Vigil of a Nation" with the very best of intentions. "It is essentially a book about a journey," he says on page one. "This is what I saw and what I felt."

When he sticks to what he saw and felt he does a magnificent job of it. He's written masterfully of the "colors and sounds and smells" as he encountered them on his six months' journey to wartime China during the winter of 1943-44.

In Chungking, he wanted and expected to see, "not a Chungking dressed up for parade, but one in war attire, a little shabby at the elbows for the seven years of hard service. It would be a Chungking tattered and heroic, beloved and familiar as life itself."

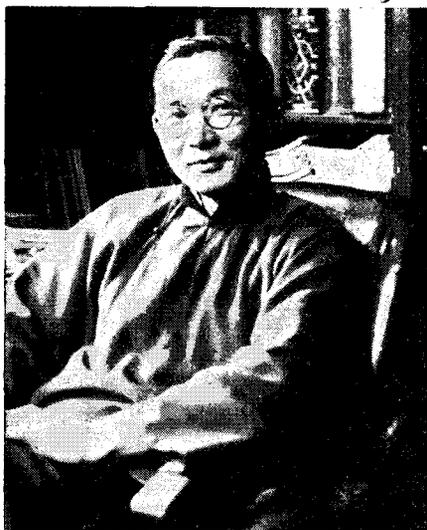
He strolls the streets with his senses attuned to all the many and varied sights and smells and sounds of a bustling, over-crowded boom town wartime capital. He notes its many refugees from the coastal provinces who have brought with them their dialects, their special foods, and their modernisms. He deploras the scarcity of books and attributes this mistakenly to an embargo instead of blockade. He is distressed by the inflation which has brought so much hardship, particularly to the salaried white-collar class. But he's proud that they can take it, and will continue to take it, until the enemy is driven from the land.

So, too, is he proud of what he saw of wartime China's industrialization—industrialization in the face of blockade, inflation, and lack of machinery or trained personnel. That three out of four Chungking-made matches would not light does not discourage him. In his childhood he had seen only Japanese or Swedish matches. Now China was making her own matches, and one out of four was certain to light! "That is no small national triumph," he observes with pride, "and I have the right to be immensely pleased." So, too, is he proud of all the things a blockaded China was compelled by necessity to make for herself—pencils, dry-batteries, dental creams, toothbrushes, telephones, radios, gear-cutters, and gasoline.

It is when Philosopher Lin leaves off writing of colors and sounds and smells and takes on the job of defending a hurt and misunderstood China, "stepchild of the United Nations and,

like all stepchildren, heaped with ridicule," that "The Vigil of a Nation" becomes, to me, regrettably disappointing. For here Dr. Lin steps into a field I believe to be beyond his experience and first-hand knowledge—particularly with respect to the "civil war" between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists.

His motives undoubtedly stem from a sense of patriotism—to set the record straight about what he personally feels is an injustice to the Government-ruling Kuomintang Party. But Dr. Lin, unfortunately, does not probe deeply enough into the problem. He does not, for example, listen to what both sides have to say, as any fair-minded reporter should do. He scorns the foreign newsmen in Chungking for refusing to accept the Government Spokesman's categorical denial that several hundred thousand of the best



Lin Yutang

troops in China were being used to impose an economic and military blockade against the Communists in the north. He is shocked to learn that these foreign correspondents went to the Communists' official representative in Chungking, Tung Pi-wu, and asked for his comment, and were told, "If there's no blockade why doesn't the Government let you correspondents go up there and see for yourselves?"

Instead, Dr. Lin appears to believe just about everything the Kuomintang diehards told him about the Communists. He proceeds, then, to blast the Communists with an imposing array of arguments, facts, and figures to prove that the Communists are traitorous So-and-Sos who are shamefully airing a family dispute abroad, while "the Chinese Government still prefers to keep its mouth shut, like

a witness in the dock trying to protect someone he loves."

Chinese Government publicity, he adds, "has not let out one unkind word about the Communists."

Perhaps Dr. Lin hasn't or doesn't read the newspapers, or he wouldn't be so positive about this. In point of fact, the case is somewhat reversed. Government officials—including the Generalissimo himself—have publicly referred to the Communists in the strongest of terms, and on numerous occasions. May I call Dr. Lin's attention to some of these:

In his instructions for the settlement of the "problem of the Communist Party" delivered before the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang in September, 1943, the Generalissimo said:

We earnestly expect the Communist Party will . . . abandon its policy of forcefully occupying our national territory and give up their past tactics of assaulting National Government troops in various sectors, thus obstructing the prosecution of the war.

Some days later, on September 14, 1943, the Central Executive Committee dutifully proclaimed in a formal resolution:

The Communist Party instead of showing the slightest sign of being moved . . . has actually intensified its activities in endangering the security of the State and sabotaging our war efforts . . .

And, from an editorial in the Kuomintang's official organ, the *Chung Yang Jih Pao*, of September 16, 1943:

Both in action and principle the Chinese Communists have tried consistently to reach their political objectives by armed violence after building up their own armed forces and an independent administration. This has, unfortunately, delayed China's unification and reduced her power to resist. Everyone can see that, apart from the Kuomintang, there is no other force in China capable of organizing a war against Japan.

(I record these particular quotations for they appeared just about the time Dr. Lin was setting out for China to gather his material for "The Vigil of a Nation.")

We foreign correspondents in Chungking were expected to cable such statements to our papers. Yet, when we tried to send the Communists' answer to some of the charges made against them, our cables were not only censored by the Kuomintang authorities but we were accused of being "unfriendly" to the Government. They just couldn't understand a newspaperman's sense of duty to get at the truth through a hearing from both sides in a controversy. So far as the Chungking Powers-That-Be were con-

cerned you were either "for us or agin us."

For first-hand information they sent Dr. Lin on a Cook's Tour of the front. In Sian he talked with some party workers in the War Area Service who told him some very interesting stories. (Incidentally, I was in Sian a few months later and heard the same stories from the same party workers.) One told "an amusing but sad story," reports Reporter Lin, of how they set a trap and made the Communists fight the Japanese by mistake. It seems a Kuomintang officer disguised some of his men as Communists and made a hit-and-run attack on the Japanese. At the same time, more of his men—disguised as Japanese—attacked the Communists camp near by. "Soon the Japs and the Communists found themselves fighting, with both sides suffering severe casualties," related the party worker gleefully. The trick was repeated several times that year, "until the Communists found it out and captured the Kuomintang officer and buried him alive."

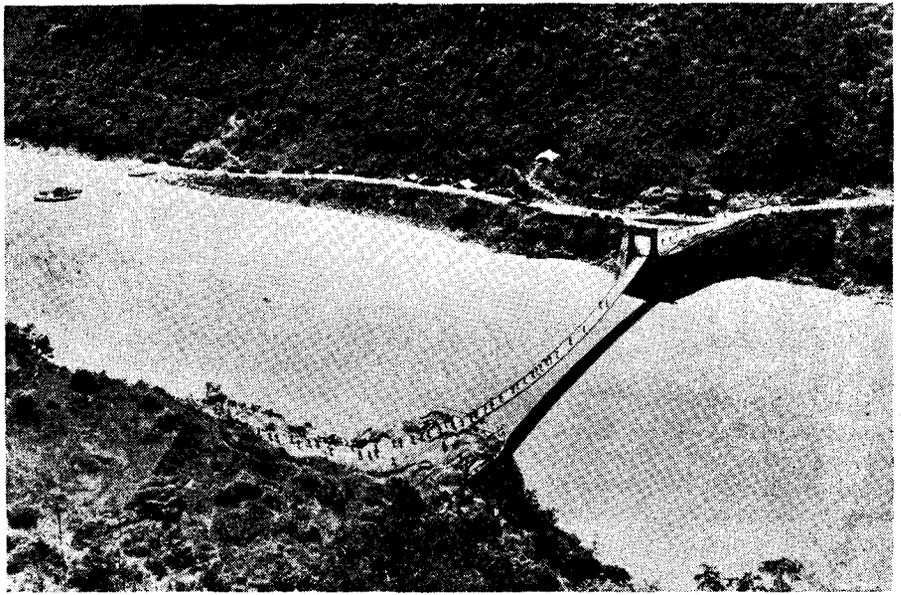
Dr. Lin tells this smart-aleck's story to prove that the Communists are barbarians who bury their fellow Chinese alive. "They buried over 400 alive in 1941," he says with horror. Dr. Lin appears to forget that the fellow was most certainly a traitor to set the enemy against his own people, instead of joining with the Communists to destroy the invader.

There are occasional moments when Dr. Lin is his own critical, reasoning self. At such moments Dr. Lin frankly takes the government-ruling Kuomintang Party to task and is surprisingly frank about it.

While he does not believe it definitely fascist, he does think the Kuomintang today "has all the evils of paternalism, overanxious to guide and channel people's thoughts and actions, and not anxious enough to let the people guide themselves." Such evils of paternalism, however, are corrigible, he believes. "The evils of totalitarianism are not. For definite evidence of the latter, one must go to Yenan," he concludes.

This paternalism, he declares, is to a certain extent inevitable in the Kuomintang's "period of political tutelage," as the very name implies. "Yet the declared aim of such political tutelage is teaching the people to govern themselves, and the sooner they are allowed to govern themselves in every direction and have their voice heard, the earlier will they see results."

Meanwhile what China needs is an immediate enforcement of the Bill of Rights, he declared. "When the protection of civil rights is enforced, the people do not have to learn to be



Hwitung foot bridge built over the Salween River in southwestern China by U. S. Army Engineers.

democratic." He insists, moreover, the people of China are already prepared for democracy, and that they should be given freedom of the press, of speech, belief, and assembly, which are the foundations of democracy, and which afford the only effective check on the honesty and efficiency of their government. "When the ruling party," he warns, "forgets that it is only elected to rule by the rest of the group, and tends to suppress criticism of its actions, it is to that extent undemocratic." And, he adds, "insofar as the Kuomintang has failed to encourage liberty of criticism through freedom of the press, it is moving in the wrong direction."

Revealing a commendable sympathy with the problems and plights of the "little people" in China, Dr. Lin is moved to find at least something good about the Communists. They are democratic, he observes, "only in the sense that they have always theoretically stood for the rights of the peasants and labor, that they are ahead of Chungking in organizing people for self-government, that they have workers' unions, peasant unions, women's unions, that they have stood for the peasants against the landlords and have reduced the interest on loans."

The Kuomintang, on the other hand, has "failed to emphasize the rights of peasants and labor and the common people," he writes. "Nowhere in Kuomintang China have I seen the common people made to feel that they are important. Yet, until the people of China are made to feel that the 'little people' are the important people, China will fail in the final analysis to qualify for the title of democracy."

There is, to be sure, much to be said for Dr. Lin's concern but continued encouragement of the Chinese Com-

munist by American opinion may eventually lead to a magnification of the problem. China may well find herself confronted with a "Chinese Jinnah and a Chinese 'Pakistan'." There are few Americans, indeed, who will wish that for China. Dr. Lin suggests the best way to avert such a sharp political division—with its imminent threat to open civil war—is for Washington to send three tank divisions to the Kuomintang-controlled armies. That most certainly is the fascist way of answering the political demands of ninety millions of people—whatever these demands might be. The democratic way would be to set the whole problem before the people—all the people—and let them decide for themselves what should be their form of government and who should be their leaders. Dr. Lin himself says the people of China are already prepared for such democracy.

Had this book reflected more of Philosopher Lin and less of Reporter Lin, it would have been, for me at least, well worth reading. Unfortunately, he has seen fit to weight it with too much obviously propagandist material based upon what he was fed by diehard Kuomintang members who must have sold him on the idea that it was his patriotic duty to correct a "distorted picture" resulting from "some low-grade reporting."

For Philosopher Lin to take this responsibility upon his shoulders is a definite step-down in dignity. He shouldn't have done it; regardless of how convincing all those arguments, those facts and figures they gave him must have sounded. For while he is without question entitled to his personal opinions, he is shockingly off the track about altogether too much of his

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# A View of Business as "Rule Maker"

*TOMORROW'S BUSINESS.* By Beardsley Ruml. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1945. 238 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PAUL M. O'LEARY

**M**R. RUML is one of those rare and fortunate men who can find time in a strenuous business career to reflect upon broad social problems, come to firm conclusions, and present them to the public in simple, lucid English. His influence upon our Federal tax system is well known though not universally appreciated at this time of year. His views on post-war taxation are a subject of lively controversy in many quarters. In "Tomorrow's Business" he has given us a calm, good tempered, clearly written book covering a range of problems where calmness, good temper, and clearness are all too frequently absent.

Mr. Ruml is principally interested in freedom as an end and government as a means of establishing, maintaining, and fostering freedom. His theory of government is pluralistic. He chooses to treat business in its governing aspect, that is as a "rule maker," or form of private government, the three other such agencies being the family, the church, and the trade-union. Business has three functions: to get things ready for use, to provide people with purposeful activity, and to give people a way to save productively a part of what they earn. But the ultimate validity of business as a social institution depends upon whether it "helps or hinders us in the attainment of personal dignity and freedom." Mr. Ruml devotes the first twenty-six pages of his book to defining freedom the essence of which he finds to be a condition under which people "can realize, with reasonable completeness, the potentialities as persons that inhere in their capacities as individuals. The demand for freedom is a demand for fulfilment, for growth, for life—not in the material or biological area alone, but also in the realm of mind and spirit."

This concern with freedom as the end and government in its plural forms as means is far too rare in most current economic writing which all too frequently takes "full employment" as the end and everything else, including in many instances the sacrifice of considerable freedom, as the means. Mr. Ruml believes ardently in the necessity of maintaining full employment and he presents a program for doing it but he is sharply attentive at all times to the impact of economic controls upon freedom. He is optimistic as to the possibility of maintain-

ing the health of business at a level where as a form of private government, a "rule maker," it can both preserve and foster freedom, and insure full employment. Bold use of the greatly enlarged post-war Federal budget, scientific reform of Federal taxation, and stabilization of the construction industry through reforms of its own restrictive practices accompanied by carefully planned public works are the principal weapons he would employ to maintain a high level of business health.

Every one of Mr. Ruml's proposals in regard to government fiscal policy, taxation reform, and stabilization of the construction industry raises a host of controversial questions, each one of which could be discussed at great length. In fact they are being so discussed in economic journals and elsewhere. Mr. Ruml makes out a persuasive case for his program, though he probably underestimates the difficulty of actually putting it into effect in view of the way the Federal government operates. There is a vast difference between a fiscal program which is good on paper and one which has much chance of actually emerging from the numerous executive and legislative agencies which assist (though they do not always cooperate) at the birth of any fiscal measure, whether it be an appropriation bill or a revenue bill. Furthermore, I suspect that part of Mr. Ruml's success in making his fiscal program seem more financially "respectable" than it has appeared in other guises and under other sponsorship as "government spending" and an "unbalanced budget" is due to his adroitness at assuming a high level of



Beardsley Ruml

national income to be taxed (140 billion dollars at 1943 prices) and a lower Federal post-war budget than we are likely to have (18 billion dollars).

Nowhere in "Tomorrow's Business" is adequate attention given to the efforts of private governments or "rule makers," that is business and trade-unions, to capture public government and devote it to their own purposes—the problem of "pressure groups." Supremacy of public government is assumed. The private governments are subordinate and assumed to be generally acquiescent in their inferior positions. Actually the efforts of Mr. Ruml's private governments to dominate public government constitute one of the most crucial social problems of our time. He indicates his awareness of the problem but does not really come to grips with it. This defect should be borne in mind by readers of Mr. Ruml's eminently readable and stimulating book.

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## Crosses in the Desert

for Pte Eric Barnes, R.A.S.C., d. in action near Mareth 1943

By Edward Fenton

**O**THER voices lying here  
have no words left to say;  
and now, no way  
to have or hear this clear  
incredibly quiet day.

Wind and the weeks will soon retrieve  
these footprints, where I stand—  
life in my hand—  
and by my breathing, wreathe  
the impenetrable sand.

Within my wordless thoughts, I know,  
wondering, that I seek  
out of this bleak  
sharp blazing scene to learn:  
whose time to listen, now?

Whose, now, to speak?