

because of the war. That's enough for them.

Spies and Bandits

UNO SHINTARŌ

He arranges our meeting as if it were a clandestine rendezvous. He is to be recognized by the red handkerchief in the vest pocket of his suit. He picks a crowded spot "by the bronze lion" in front of the Mitsukoshi Department Store on the Ginza and then chooses a quite public coffee shop as the site for our conversation. His long pale fingers are always in motion, clenching and unclenching, frequently mimicking the grip and motion of a man wielding a Japanese sword.

On his return from China, where he was a prisoner of war, he put his Chinese-language skills to work in a small trading company at a time when the major Japanese firms were barred from taking part in the China trade by politics. "I really believe the Chinese Communist Party were the ones who spared my life. In that sense, they were quite different from America and the Allies, who hanged one thousand sixty-eight."^o

I was born in the Japanese Concession in Tientsin, China. When my father returned from the Russo-Japanese War, he wasn't able to make a

^o Out of 4,000 arrested as war criminals by Allied nations in the Pacific and Asian theaters, 1,068 were executed or died in prison from 1946 to 1951. Only 14 of these were the Class A war criminals like former prime minister Tōjō tried by the Tokyo War Tribunal. Most of the rest were tried separately by the countries where they were stationed during the war. Most fell not into the category of Class A criminals charged with crimes against peace, but were in Class B charged with ordering and directing atrocities, or Class C charged with the actual execution of atrocities. See Kazuko Tsurumi, "The War Tribunal: The Voice of the Dead," in her *Social Change and the Individual: Japan Before and After Defeat in World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 138–40.

living in Japan, so he went to Korea and then on to Tientsin, where Japan had extraterritorial privileges. He was a dealer in woolens and had a Western clothing shop, a trade he'd apprenticed in at a high-class gentlemen's clothier back in Kobe. The last Manchu Emperor, Pu Yi, got his morning coats, formal clothes, and everyday suits from my father while he was under Japanese "protection." But my father finally got really angry with him and threatened to quit. Everyone close to "the Emperor of Manchukuo" demanded bribes of those he patronized. Father he couldn't make a profit that way. Finally, the Japanese consul general and some lieutenant generals sent some money his way, so he went back to making the Emperor's clothes. Sometimes Pu Yi came to the ice-skating rink at the Japanese elementary school in winter, and I once skated near him. I was raised by a Chinese *amah* from the time I was weaned. I had my very own, and so did my younger brother, and my sisters. I had this nurse until the moment I went soldiering. She cried when I went off. She asked me, "Why are you going to the army? In China, only poor men become soldiers."

I joined the Forty-First Regiment in Fukuyama, Hiroshima prefecture. You don't need to be a university graduate in the military, as long as you pass the required tests. It's hard dealing with the textbooks at first, but once you learn how to memorize them, it's easy. What orders to issue in what situations, how to arrange your forces in any given circumstance. By the book. As long as you look good doing what you do, full of gestures and enthusiasm, and perform flawlessly, they shower you with praise. Bullets don't fly in your direction during exercises, but the deputy commander checks you off. The more simple-minded you are, the better off you are. The old soldiers gave me a hard time for studying after lights-out for the candidate reserve officer examination, but I passed. I'd done it!

After a few months of active field operations in China at the rank of corporal, I was sent back to Japan, to First Kurume Reserve Officer School, where I graduated thanks in part to sumō wrestling, judō, bayonet fencing, swordmanship, horsemanship, and gymnastics, all of which also counted toward graduation. Then I was assigned to the military police, the Kempeitai, at an infantry regimental headquarters in China.

There really wasn't any concrete training for intelligence-gathering or pacification operations. I was only told that I would serve in intelligence when I got to the field. In China, it was all case-by-case. I had to do my duty based on my own judgment. There were several ways the Japanese military gathered information about the enemy. One was supposed to be scouting. A noncom or an officer would go out with a minimum force, approaching the enemy position as closely as possible.

There they would observe them with binoculars and note details about their positions, organization, and combat conditions. Sometimes you could use sophisticated radio receivers at headquarters to intercept signals from Chungking.

The major means of getting intelligence, though, was to extract information by interrogating prisoners. They don't say anything if you don't ask. Even threatened, they often didn't speak. If you torture them, some will talk. Other's won't. Torture was an unavoidable necessity. Murdering and burying them follows naturally. You do it so you won't be found out.

I worked near and for regimental, battalion, and company commanders, and when battles took a turn for the worse, they grew tense and irritable. They had to decide whether to attack or not, and they needed intelligence. How to get the information for them became my problem. You had to show results. We compared the information we had extracted to that we received from higher headquarters. If ours seemed superior, we would act based on our own information.

Getting good intelligence information for our punitive expeditions and offensive operations was a very, very difficult problem for us. We hardly slept at all. Adjutants drafted plans and proposed them to the regimental commander. You have to have reasons for mobilizing your soldiers, and we contributed. We had to contribute to the decision-making process. We tried to secure the needed information by using torture. I gathered capable soldiers and noncoms who understood Chinese and trained them. I was sure this was my purpose for living. I believed and acted in this way because I was convinced of what I was doing. We carried out our duty as instructed by our masters. We did it for the sake of our country. From our filial obligation to our ancestors. On the battlefield, we never really considered the Chinese humans. When you're winning, the losers look really miserable. We concluded that the Yamato race was superior.

An intelligence officer also uses spies and pays out rewards for information. Baiting the trap properly was the key to success. Spies were generally gangsters. Bright gangsters. Paper money had no value for them. They wanted opium. In big cities or large villages, there were always pariahs. We'd find them and train them, threaten them, cajole them. We'd tell them, "If you take the wrong course, we'll kill you, but if you do what you're told, you'll have to build warehouses to hold your fortune." We'd then bring out the opium. "I'll do it!" they'd say in a minute. Every day we received large amounts of the drug. Today, you could buy a fleet of automobiles with that! The opium came down from staff level at division headquarters. The better we did, the more opium

came. Spies are traitors. The more of a traitor each was, the better information he brought in.

When we got good intelligence, I immediately went to the regimental commander and made my "I-would-like-to-receive-your-seal-for-this-information-Sir" speech. "Sure this is true?" he'd ask. I'd say, "Yes," and we'd call in a signal soldier, who'd send off a coded telegram to division or corps. It might seem a little strange for me to say this about myself, but I was appreciated as an intelligence officer. You couldn't really get much information from watching the enemy through your binoculars, but with opium you could get mountains of it. Some was false, some was true. To differentiate between the two was where my technique was needed. Intelligence officers played a much more crucial role than people think.

I interrogated many people, but two I remember particularly well. Chen Jing was a boy soldier. He was taken prisoner of war in a major operation at the end of 1943. Big as Chen Jing was, he was only sixteen or seventeen. He looked so innocent and naïve that they brought him back without killing him. He soon learned our Japanese songs, and some officers put him to work in the regimental armory repairing weapons. Everyone trusted him.

The regiment received twenty to thirty spare pistols each year. That year they went missing. Chen Jing had stolen them and passed them along to the guerrillas. This was discovered only because, during a punitive strike, dead guerrillas were found with Japanese pistols and the serial numbers matched the newly delivered weapons from the regimental armory. I conducted the interrogation. The most excruciating torture is to tie their hands behind their back with a string and then hang them from a wall by that cord. All their weight is borne by their shoulders. It works better than beating or strangling. If you use this method, ninety percent of them talk. But Chen Jing didn't. When he realized he wouldn't be spared, his attitude changed. I reported this to the regimental commander. He told me to make my own decision about what should be done with him. As Cheng Jing passed by the door of my room on the way to his execution, he shouted at me, "I will avenge myself on you! I did it for my motherland!"

Enemy enlisted men have little information of value. Only the officers know anything of great use. Pi Shu-t'ing, the second man, was a captain, himself an intelligence officer. He looked obedient, as if he'd do whatever we said, but he resisted. We had had a special cell built for the most stubborn ones. I named the torture we did there the "excrement technique." Usually, during your incarceration, your feces were removed from your cell, but not in that room. There, you were covered in your

own shit and, sooner or later, you died insane. Occasionally we'd yell in the cell window, "Still not talking?" "Never!" Pi Shu-t'ing would shout back.

Officers and noncommissioned officers all had swords officially issued to them, the so-called Shōwa swords, but besides those, they brought quality swords from home. They'd want to give these a "cutting test." I often got such requests through my senior noncom. One sergeant in particular was looking for a chance to lop off a head. I gave him Pi Shu-t'ing, but told him to do it right. He was dragged from the cell—he could no longer walk—to a hill about seven hundred meters away.

I personally severed more than forty heads. Today, I no longer remember each of them well. It might sound extreme, but I can almost say that if more than two weeks went by without my taking a head, I didn't feel right. Physically, I needed to be refreshed. I would go to the stockade and bring someone out, one who looked as if he wouldn't live long. I'd do it on the riverbank, by the regimental headquarters, or by the side of the road. I'd order the one I planned to kill to dig a hole, then cut him down and cover him over.

My everyday sword was a Shōwa sword, a new one with the name Sadamitsu. My other sword was called Osamune Sukesada. It was presented to me by my father and dated from the sixteenth century. Sukesada was a sword made for fighting. It cut well, even if you were unskilled. It wasn't a particularly magnificent sword, but it was the kind the samurai in that time of constant warfare appreciated. It was the best sword for murder. With Sadamitsu, you couldn't really take a head with a single stroke. The neck was cut through, but it didn't fall. Heads fell easily to Sukesada. A good sword could cause a head to drop with just an easy motion.

But even I sometimes botched the job. They were physically weakened by torture. They were semiconscious. Their bodies tended to move. They swayed. Sometimes I'd hit the shoulder. Once a lung popped out, almost like a balloon. I was shocked. All I could do was hit the base of the neck with my full strength. Blood spurted out. Arteries were cut, you see. The man fell immediately, but it wasn't a water faucet, so it soon stopped. Looking at that, I felt ecstasy. I'm not that way today.

You might ask how it could happen that we'd kill people like this. It was easy. Once, for instance, I got a call from divisional headquarters: "You've made grandiose claims, Uno, but the area you're responsible for isn't secure. How are you going to explain this?" I could only answer that I had no excuse. I then resolved to clean up things. I dispatched our reserve squad, took the village mayor and others captive, and tortured them. They claimed they didn't know anything. I was furious. I'll show

them, I thought. I lined them up, nine of them, and cut their heads off. I knew that only two of them would have bent my Shōwa sword all out of shape, so I used my father's sword. As might have been expected, that good old sword did the job with no ill effects. Guerrillas at that time caused enormous losses for our forces. Even killing them didn't even the score! Among the "guerrillas" I killed were military men and a village chief.

The day I did those nine people, you know, I was quite calm. That night I went out drinking at a restaurant. I brought other captives to bury those bodies. We did that in the open field next to the prisoner encampment. We told them not to look, but in a sense, it was better for us if they did. They would realize that if they got out of line, they too might be in danger.

A horse squadron was attached to our regiment. At that time, new-minted recruits, with just one star, arrived straight from the Homeland. The man responsible for their training asked if he could put on a display, as part of their education. We showed them executions. They hid their eyes in their hands, they couldn't look. Right from Japan, without any training. "*Pah-pah!*" I did it, without getting even a drop of blood on my uniform. There's a way to cut them, you see. A sword is not a knife. If you have a fine sword, you merely have to pull it from its scabbard and draw it across the shoulders. It cuts right through. You don't have to expend any real effort. Don't have to swing it from way up high. You just stop after you've cut through.

Most officers did this. If they didn't, their authority was weakened. The men would say, "He's nothing but appearances." Nobody wanted to be called "spineless." It wasn't so bad doing it in the midst of battle, but there's a lot of pressure on you when you cut off a head with everyone watching. We usually had about eighty captives under our control, though sometimes we had as many as a hundred and fifty. Most were captured at the front. According to regulations, captives were supposed to be sent back to headquarters. Company prisoners were to be sent back to battalion, and battalion captives to regiment. Whenever we had about eighty useful prisoners, we'd phone division and send them along if they wanted them. The ones I killed were those there was no point sending on.

Near the end of the war, our regiment was on the line of the Yellow River, but we were ordered to Manchuria, because Manchukuo had been emptied when all its defenders were sent to other fronts. Our unit had a great tradition. "If we're to go into combat against the Soviets we'll confound their plans"—so we thought! Officers like me didn't believe Japan could lose. We were moved by the Yamato spirit.

American were damned bastards to me then. I burned with hatred

for them. Even when the navy began to get beaten—we learned of this by radio—we didn't think it would happen to the army even if we were less well equipped than the enemy. I never dreamed the Emperor would throw in the towel. I believed he would share our fate. But he just threw up his hands and quit. Radio reception was poor, so that all we caught were snatches from the Imperial announcement of surrender. We learned its contents only from a stenographic copy of it. I'd already heard that an unprecedentedly powerful bomb had been dropped, but I still believed that in the battle on the beaches Japan would be strong. We would hit back then!

Everyone, including the division commander, assembled on the parade ground. Two regimental flags were there. I was ordered to be the flag officer in charge of burning them. The bugle sounded and I did it with tears streaming down my face. The chrysanthemum seals at the tips of the flag standards were made of brass and would not burn, so we blew them to pieces with explosives. I tied my two swords together, and blew them up along with those imperial symbols. It was August 19, 1945.

I thought the victors would deal with the losers in a gentlemanly manner. But the Soviet forces came and we were hauled off to the Soviet Union. According to international agreements, at the end of hostilities prisoners of war held by each side should be released and allowed to return home, whether victor or loser. For five years, though, we were enslaved. When I was turned over to the Chinese I thought they had nothing on me. But they had people to testify to everything. I admitted to what I had done, or anyway to most of it. I couldn't admit I'd killed nine that one day. I only confessed to six. Our trial lasted about a week. Afterwards I went to a prison cell. Every day I thought tomorrow would be the day I would be sentenced to death. I couldn't sleep at all. I heard my mother's voice. But the Communists only gave me thirteen years. After my sentencing, the surviving families of the Chinese charged the judge, crying out in fury. In the end, I served eight years.

If our meeting today had happened back then, when I first saw your face, I'd have noticed your neck without fail. When I walked into the regimental commander's room, I'd announce, "Second Lieutenant Uno arriving!" The regimental commander might be looking at a map, sitting on a chair. I'd see his neck and forget instantly that I was a second lieutenant, he, a colonel. What a great neck, I'd think. Then suddenly I'd come back to my senses. It was almost like being addicted to murder. When I met people, I often looked at their necks and made a judgment. Is this an easy neck, or hard to cut? I'm not really reminiscing about those days, but that's how you become, murdering people. I regret this. But that kind of reflex impulse is still somewhere in me. Prime Minister

Takeshita's neck is an easy neck to cut. The best necks aren't really skinny or too fat either. Foreign Minister Abe's isn't easy; you'd get caught up in his chin. I'm only joking, but that's how it really is. I ended up like this.