

Imperial and Foreign News.

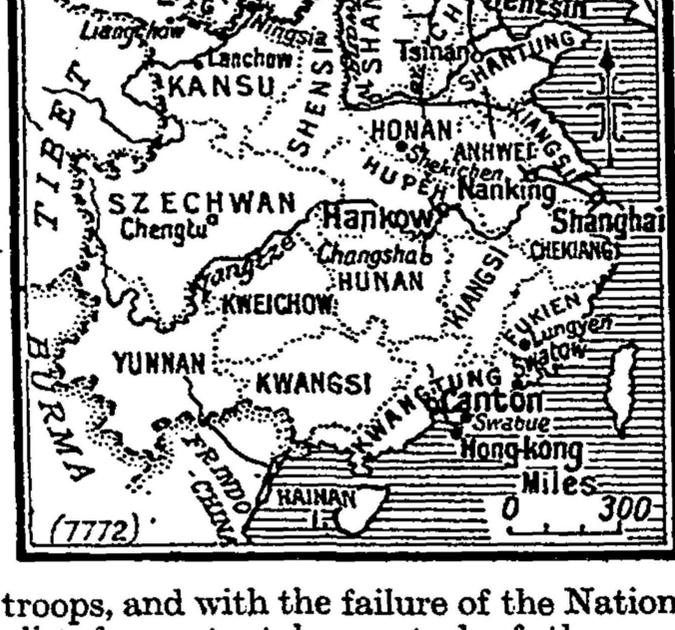
BRIGANDAGE IN CHINA.

IN THE NAME OF COMMUNISM.

(FROM OUR SHANGHAI CORRESPONDENT.)

How widely spread is brigandage in China, how quick the outlaws are to seize every opportunity for plunder, is shown by three letters which reached Shanghai in July from Honan, from Ninghsia, in the extreme northern apex of Kansu, and from south-west Fukien.

It was reported in *The Times* of June 10 that Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Weller, Mr. and Mrs. John Walker and their baby, and Miss J. P. Brook, all English members of the China Inland Mission, were being held prisoners by bandits at Shekichen, in Honan, birthplace of White Wolf. Since the withdrawal of Feng Yu-hsiang's



troops, and with the failure of the Nationalist forces to take control of the province, brigands have been working terrible havoc in Honan, even capturing and sacking Wu Pei-fu's old stronghold, Loyang. To the number of 6,000 they burst into Shekichen in the morning of June 2 and at once began burning and looting. Whole streets went up in flames, shops were gutted, inhabitants beaten, tortured, and shot. The brigands were utterly ruthless. The China Inland Mission compound escaped burning, but the missionaries soon found themselves prisoners in the upper parts of their houses, obliged to watch while refugees were chased screaming out of the compound and beaten and shot before them. The missionaries, however, contrived to hide two Chinese Christian girls and even ultimately to get them away to safety.

BABY AS PASSPORT.

The brigands on first entering bound Mr. Walker and led him off to be shot, but wiser counsels prevailed and they brought him back to hold as hostage with his wife and companions. Chiefly through the devotion of Chinese friends in the town, the missionaries were supplied with food, and by some extraordinary means milk was sent in for the baby. As an illustration of the amazing contradictions of Chinese nature, the baby was the greatest attraction to the bandits, who took a continual interest in it. On June 16, the looting having died down some days before and the fiercest brigands having moved elsewhere, Mr. Joyce, head of the China Inland Mission in Honan, made his way to Shekichen by motor-car under the greatest peril, and after parleying with the bandits was allowed to take away all the party except Mr. Weller, who was held for some days longer (he has since been set free) against delivery of 2,000 uniforms for those who wished to be enrolled in the army. Twice the motor-car was stopped on its way out; but the missionaries fortunately were recognized, and the baby on each occasion proved an invaluable passport.

It is calculated that it will take Shekichen eight years to recover from the bandits' destruction, even if no other misfortune occurs, and it is feared that the dryness of the spring will mean a bad famine next autumn.

The adventures of Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Scoville, Mrs. Nystrom, and a Catholic father (whose name is not given) at Ninghsia, in Kansu, occurred early in April, of which news has only just reached Shanghai owing to the distance and slowness of communications. Some 3,000 Moslem bandits attacked and captured the city by scaling the walls, and remained in possession for 23 days. They cleaned out the only bank and looted the chief stores, but did not shoot many people, as most of the population lay low behind barred doors. Many of the bandits festooned themselves in yards of looted silk and postured about the city, wonderful to behold. They spared the missionaries' house in return for the latter's treating their wounded. Bandits seem to make a practice of doing this wherever they go. However, they relieved Mr. Scoville of all the spare cash he had. Many of the bandits were mere boys; one confessed that he was only 11. The leader always treated the missionaries with great politeness and seemed to take a pleasure in discussing theological questions with them.

CHINESE TORTURES.

About three weeks later some Government troops appeared in the neighbourhood, and Mr. Scoville and the Catholic Father were selected by the bandits to go out and mediate on their behalf. Terms were arranged, but the bandits seized the opportunity to make a treacherous flank attack on the troops. It was beaten off; and as the missionaries positively declined thenceforward to do any more mediating, the outlaws were forced to abandon the city, after extorting a few thousand dollars from the merchants as the price of not burning their houses.

The name of Chu Mao has been infamous on the borders of Fukien and Kwangtung for two years past. Twice he has been driven to refuge in the mountains, being too mobile to catch, but at the first sign of relaxed authority (as presented by the recent war between Kwangtung and Kwangsi), he comes down again to ravage the plains. Chu Mao calls himself a Communist; some of his men are said to have been trained under the Cheka: many are remnants of the army and fiends who made Swabue, near Swatow, a perfect hell in the early part of last year; and wherever Chu Mao goes he begins by calling on the farmers to rise and destroy the capitalist and bourgeois. But he is really the worst kind of brigand. At the end of May, after two unsuccessful attempts, he stormed the large town of Lungyen in south-west Fukien. A Chinese correspondent gives the following picture of their doings:—

The ruffians took a fiendish pleasure in torturing those they were about to slay. Some were disembowelled, some hanged, some drowned, some brained, some shot. They beheaded some and some they buried alive. They dismembered others at the joints and some they cut in small pieces. Women were killed with nameless tortures that cannot be written down. They took special pleasure in burning

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bookshops and the homes of prominent citizens. That they looted the money shops and banks goes without saying; altogether the loss to the city must be about \$10,000,000. Those that were fortunate enough to escape fled into the country and must number many thousands.

Having done with Lungyen, the bandits withdrew again to the hills to riot on their gains and await redemption of their captives. It may be suggested that the Chinese correspondent's picture is overdrawn. But one need not think so. One has a vivid recollection of the well-authenticated outrages, no less horrible than the above, that have been perpetrated where the native ferocity of Chinese bandits has been stimulated by Soviet instruction.