

A Chinese military spokesman was said to have stated that the Japanese drive had been planned for months in advance. Preparations had begun early in the year, when Chinese guerrillas were cleared from the north bank of the Yangtse east of Ichang in Central Hupeh. Then came operations in the region of Lake Tungting (March to May), which netted the Japanese several new bases in the Hunan-Hupeh border area. The 'all-out drive on Chungking' began May 11, when the Japanese ceased to confine their attention to Lake Tungting and began to move through western Hupeh, advancing 60 miles in two weeks.

The National Herald (Chungking), which relies on the Chinese Foreign Office for much of its material, has denied that the Japanese objective in the current operations has been Chungking. At least a million men would be needed for such an operation, it declares, and even with a force of that size success would be uncertain. Latest advices from London suggest that the enemy's purpose is rather to seize existing rice stocks in one of China's most fertile areas and to disrupt this season's planting operations, with a view to making it more difficult than ever for the Chinese Government to cope with problems of food supply.

To what extent this purpose was accomplished before the defeat of the Japanese forces is not yet clear. Chinese counter-attacks, both north and south of Ichang, supported by Chinese and American air attacks on Ichang itself, resulted in a considerable victory for the forces of General Chen Cheng, Vice Minister of War, who has been in command of operations in this sector. Yuyangkwan was recaptured on May 30, Changyang is now under attack, and although the Japanese still retain Ichang as a strong forward base, they have been pushed back from most of the lesser towns occupied during last week's drive.