

5. JINAN INCIDENT

Tanaka and Chiang meet

As stated above, Chiang Kai-shek resigned from his position of NRA commander in chief in August 1927. In late September, he traveled to Japan, accompanied by his friend and adviser Zhang Qun. On November 5 the two men visited Prime Minister Tanaka at his residence in Aoyama, Tokyo. Their conversation lasted for about two hours, during which they discussed the following matters.

First, Tanaka urged Chiang to consolidate the region south of the Yangzi: “As long as that area remains ununified, the CCP will continue to grow. I would suggest consolidating the area south of the Yangzi, and waiting to set off on the Northern Expedition until you have established a stable base. This is a task you and only you can accomplish.” As he offered advice to Chiang, Tanaka was also affirming his faith in the Chinese leader.

Tanaka continued: “Japan has greater interests in China than the other powers. Japan must not interfere in Chinese domestic strife, but it is extremely painful for us to stand by and watch while the CCP runs rampant over your country. If you, as an anti-communist force, succeed in consolidating South China, you will be fulfilling Japan’s most fervent hope. To that end, we shall do everything possible to assist you in this grand endeavor, to the extent permitted by international relations, as long as Japan’s interests and other endeavors are not sacrificed.”

When the subject of Zhang Zuolin was broached, Tanaka spoke with conviction: “There are all sorts of rumors circulating to the effect that Japan is aiding Zhang, but they are far from the truth. Japan is assuredly not helping him. We are not supporting him in any way. We are not offering him counsel. We are certainly not providing him with any material aid. Japan’s only wish is for peace and order in Manchuria.”¹

Chiang Kai-shek replied that he agreed with Tanaka about not resuming the Northern Expedition until the South had been unified. But he explained that the NRA’s situation was complicated, and circumstances being what they were at the time, if he had not set the Northern Expedition in motion, the South would certainly have been divided, and there was also concern about disturbances arising there as well.

About communist infiltration of the NRA, Chiang said, “The commander is not especially frightened, but I find the notion of communists infiltrating the ranks disgraceful.” Tanaka said that he shared Chiang’s concerns, adding that “the reason for the spread of communism in Japan is the rise of the CCP. Japan has always opposed the communization of your country for one and only one reason, our self-defense.

¹ Zhang Qun, *Nikka: fūun no 70 nen* (Japan and China: 70 stormy years). In these recollections Zhang, who had served as interpreter for Chiang Kai-shek at the meeting with Tanaka, stated that “If memory serves, Tanaka stated unequivocally that he disliked Zhang Zuolin, and instead supported warlord Yang Yuting, Zhang Zuolin’s chief of staff.”

In response to Tanaka's having said that Japan was unwilling to sacrifice her interests in China, Chiang said, "I believe that if Japan's interests in China are secure, then the interests and welfare of the people of China will also be secure, and that once all is said and done, the interests of both nations are identical." He continued, saying that to attain that security, he must effect the revolution as soon as possible and stabilize China. Chiang explained that anti-Japanese activities in China were motivated by the Chinese conviction that Japan was aiding warlord Zhang Zuolin. Japan must dispel this misconception by helping the revolutionary forces achieve their goal. If she does, the Manchuria-Mongolia problem will be resolved, and the anti-Japanese agitation will end.

Then Chiang said, "If Japan is reluctant to provide any assistance to China because of her relations with other powers, she will be ignoring the special relationship between Japan and China. Many powers have dealings with us, but the only nations genuinely interested in China are Japan and Russia. Russia interferes in Chinese affairs for that reason. Why is it that Japan does not intervene and provide assistance? If I, as a member of the revolutionary party, were to speak this way, I would invite the wrath of my compatriots and be branded as a traitor. However, since I am speaking to someone who is older and wiser, and whom I trust, I am simply revealing my true feelings and stating my case to Your Excellency."²

It is certainly surprising that Chiang Kai-shek, commander in chief of the NRA, was making such revelations to Tanaka: (1) Russia is interfering in Chinese affairs, (2) the argument that Japan cannot assist China because of her relations with other powers is a trifling one that ignores the special relationship between Japan and China. Was this a disclosure of China's true intentions? If it was, then how should we assess Shidehara's non-interference policy toward China? Was that what the Chinese (or at least the GMD, Chiang's party) wanted? Was the anger of the Chinese people who denounced Japanese economic inroads as imperialistic and called for their ouster just a gesture? We are forced to make a 180° turn in our assessment of diplomatic relations with China, and we are suddenly confused.

In any case, the conversation between Tanaka and Chiang provides us with a precious historical resource in the form of a glimpse into the genuine feelings of the participants. It also makes us painfully aware of the complexities of the relationship between the two nations.

When Chiang returned to Shanghai he was interviewed by news reporters upon his arrival. He told them, "We shall not ignore the importance of Japanese political and economic interests in Manchuria. Furthermore, we are well aware of the astonishing elevation of Japanese national spirit during the Russo-Japanese War. Dr. Sun Yat-sen felt the same way as I do. What is more, I have promised to give due consideration to Japan's special status in Manchuria. Once our revolution

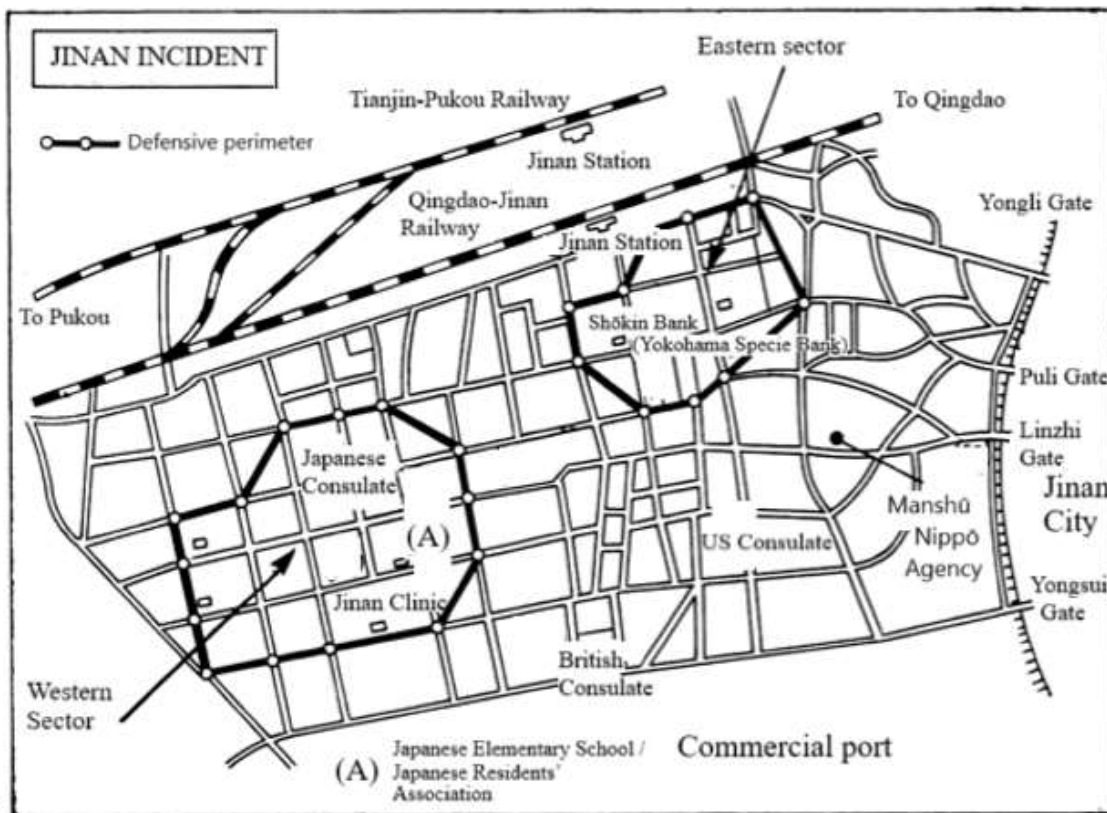
² Record of conversation between Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi and Chiang Kai-shek written by Satō Yasunosuke, one of Tanaka's advisers;
<https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/listPhoto?LANG=default&BID=F2006092115020628135&ID=M2006092115020728141&REFCODE=B02030164700>.

has been achieved, its spearhead is likely to move toward India. We have no intention of inciting Korea to oppose Japan.”³

If Chiang did indeed utter these words, it is possible to guess the content of his conversations with influential people while he was in Japan.

Asked to remove defenses, Japanese troops are attacked

Soon after his meeting with Prime Minister Tanaka, Chiang Kai-shek returned to China. In April 1928 Chiang once again took up the reins of the NRA and began the second phase of the Northern Expedition. Chiang was the commander in chief of all the revolutionary forces, and He Yingqi was his chief of staff. Chiang’s total forces, a million men, were divided into four armies. Their opponents, the northern warlords’ armies commanded by Zhang Zuolin, whose base was Beijing, were divided into seven area armies with a total of a million men led by, among others, Sun Chuanfang, Zhang Zongchang, Zhang Xueliang (son of Zhang Zuolin), and Yang Yuting. On April 7, after having issued a declaration announcing the recommencement of the Northern Expedition, the revolutionary forces (the Southern Army) began their march. They were poised to surround Jinan as early as mid-April.



³ Yamaura Kan'ichi, ed., *Mori Kaku* (Tokyo: Takayama Shoin, 1941).

The Shandong Provincial Administrative Office was located in Jinan, which consisted of the city proper and the Jinan commercial port. Jinan was also a transportation hub, located as it was at the intersection of the Tianjin-Pukou and Qingdao-Jinan railways, and with the Yellow River and canals, it bustled with commercial activity. There were approximately 70,000 households, and the population was approximately 380,000; the population of the commercial port had been burgeoning in recent times. Most of Jinan's 2,160 foreign residents lived there, Japanese residents accounting for 1,810 of their number (including 829 women).

The mood in Jinan shifted abruptly to one of alarm with the northern advance of the NRA. There was no guarantee that there would not be a recurrence of the Nanjing Incident. When Prime Minister Tanaka received a request for troops from Jinan, he agonized. But he eventually decided that he had no choice but to dispatch an army to protect the Japanese population. Toward the end of April 1928, he dispatched soldiers to Shandong in what later became known as the 2nd Shandong Expedition.

Once the Japanese soldiers arrived in Jinan, they established two defensive sectors, one each in the eastern and western sectors of the commercial port. Most Japanese lived in the commercial port. The Japanese residents took shelter in those sectors, where they could be protected by the soldiers. Unfortunately, on May 1, after the northern forces had withdrawn, the Southern (Northern Expedition) Army entered the city, and as feared, began mutilating Japanese flags and posting anti-Japanese signs. Consequently, many disputes arose, and the atmosphere in the city suddenly became tense. On May 2 a message arrived from Commander Chiang Kai-shek requesting that the Japanese military dismantle their defensive barriers; Chiang guaranteed that order would be maintained. Believing that Chiang's word was good, Japanese soldiers spent an entire night removing all the barricades and barbed wire they had put up.

The incident arose soon after the Japanese had dismantled their defenses, on the morning of May 3. It was precipitated by violent Southern Army soldiers who launched an assault on, and then plundered, an agency for the Japanese-language newspaper *Manshū Nippō* and the home of Yoshifusa Chōhei, its operator. NRA troops attacked Japanese police officers who rushed to the scene. When a rescue unit arrived, the Chinese troops fled to their barracks, where they hid but continued to fire. Disorderly combat ensued, spreading through the entire city, with Chinese troops plundering and shooting wherever they went. Soon an agreement was reached between both sides to stop the violence, but the NRA troops ignored it, even shooting and killing a Japanese emissary bearing a white flag and calling for the suspension of hostilities. The brutal Chinese troops soon transformed the city into a scene of carnage.⁴

All over Jinan a great many Japanese men and women were massacred by savage Southern Army troops, as described in the May 4 edition of the *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*.

“Southern Army beasts go on a rampage.”

⁴ Army General Staff Headquarters, *Shōwa sannen Shina jihen shuppei shi* (2nd Sino-Japanese War: 1928 Shandong expedition) (Tokyo: Gennandō Shoten, 1971).

“Brutal Southern Army troops are slaughtering Japanese citizens by the hundreds.”

Among the Japanese participants in the hostilities on May 4 and 5 were five infantry battalions, one cavalry platoon, and two field artillery companies. Of those, nine men were killed in action and 32 were wounded. During the clash, about 280 Japanese civilians who found themselves outside the defensive perimeters were brought back inside amidst a hail of bullets. Unfortunately, 12 Japanese (10 men and two women) were murdered by Chinese troops at about noon on May 30. On May 5 nine corpses covered with fresh blood were discovered buried near the railroad tracks east of Jinan Station. Another corpse was found on May 6 near the Tianjin-Pukou Railway Station. Two more, of which only the skeletons remained, were found there on May 9. Additionally, two Japanese wounded by an NRA bomb died after being taken to the hospital. More than 30 Japanese were assaulted, two women were raped, and 136 homes were invaded and looted. There were about 400 victims in all, and the cost of damage incurred was estimated at ¥359,000.

Chinese troops brutally massacre Japanese citizens

During the Jinan Incident, Chinese troops perpetrated atrocities, so horrific as to defy description, on Japanese citizens. Lt. Col. Sasaki Tōichi, an army officer stationed in Nanjing who examined the mutilated corpses of his compatriots in the wake of the incident, related what he had seen as best he could in his journal.

I happened to be present during some of the autopsies performed at the hospital. What a gruesome sight the corpses were! The hands and feet of some of the victims were bound, and their heads and faces had been slashed with something like a hatchet; other victims had been hacked to pieces. Sticks or rods have been shoved into the genitals of all the female victims. Still other victims had been set on fire; only their skeletons remained. The only way to tell that some victims were Japanese women was the white *tabi* on their feet, which had not burned when they were set on fire. The rage of our soldiers was beyond imagination.⁵

Consul Nishida Kōichi sent an official telegram to Foreign Minister Tanaka Giichi on May 9 describing the massacre of Japanese citizens in Jinan, attesting to the fact that Lt. Col. Sasaki's account contains neither falsehoods nor exaggeration.

One victim with internal organs of abdomen exposed; one woman whose genitals were penetrated by a piece of wood

One victim missing upper part of his face, which had been sliced off

One victim whose right ear was cut off and had a stab wound extending from his left cheek to the right side of the back of his head

⁵ Sasaki Tōichi, *op. cit.*

A completely decomposed corpse

Two men whose genitals had been hacked off.

Another account provides a detailed description of Chinese atrocities. It contains reports of autopsies performed at the Jinan Clinic in the presence of Japanese soldiers and police officers, as well as Chinese representatives. I am including a very small portion of the report here to demonstrate the cold-blooded manner in which Chinese troops killed their victims.

Saijō Hachitarō, male, age 28

Both hands tied behind back; appears to have been dragged over the ground facedown. Approximately 60 cm of small intestine protruding from bullet wound in abdomen.

Saijō Kin, female, age 24

Skin and soft tissue peeled off entire face and torso; 2-cm-square piece of wood shoved into genitals penetrating 27 cm.

Ōzato Shigejirō, male, age 28

Cause of death: contusions to face and broken bones at base of brain. Deceased apparently beaten with a club or similar implement.

Judging from profuse hemorrhaging near contusions to face and stab wounds to back, deceased was still alive when wounds inflicted.

Tahira Shin'ichi, male, aged 34

Broken bones on right side of forehead; extensive damage to skull from beatings with a sledgehammer or similar implement.

Small intestine protruding from 60-cm stab wound extending from lower lip to navel.

Inoue Kunitarō, male, age 30

Frontal bone of skull, both eyes, upper left jawbone, nose missing.

Both eyeballs gouged out.

Face beaten with a picaroon [axe-like logging tool] or similar implement.

Fujii Daijirō, male, age 40

All internal organs exposed by extensive knife wounds to abdomen; genitals severed at base.

Right eyeball gouged out.

Miyamoto Yūhachi, male, age 55

Genitals severed at base by sharp instrument

Takakuma Mume, female, age 50

21-cm-deep stab wound to genitals.⁶

Seething Japanese public opinion clamors for retribution

The rage felt by the Japanese in Jinan, both military and civilians, reached a boiling point as corpse after corpse of their compatriots slaughtered or raped by Southern Army troops was discovered. As one would expect, there was an outcry demanding punishment of the perpetrators.

On May 5 the truth about the Jinan Incident became clear. The knowledge that the Southern Army, holding Japan in deep contempt, had challenged Japanese troops and committed atrocities against resident Japanese civilians, sent shock waves everywhere, even in Japan proper. The Japanese clamored for retribution.

The Army General Staff Office determined that the use of force was the only way to preserve national prestige and secure the future. It advised the Jinan Expeditionary Army (6th Army Division) of the conditions for the resolution of the incident. The 6th Division proceeded to issue the following demands to the Chinese, who were to respond within 12 hours, by 4:00 p.m. on May 7.

- (1) High-ranking officers involved in the atrocities are to be executed.
- (2) Chinese troops who clashed with Japanese soldiers are to be disarmed in the presence of Japanese military personnel.
- (3) All forms of anti-Japanese propaganda are to be prohibited.
- (4) All Southern Army troops are to keep 12 kilometers away from Jinan and the Qingdao-Jinan Railway Line.

When the Chinese refused to satisfy those conditions, Japanese military personnel decided to attack Jinan City, where Chinese troops had taken cover. However, they limited their objectives to Chinese headquarters and the city walls. Additionally, to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, they established both a safety zone and an evacuation route. Therefore, Chinese troops fled the city under cover of darkness, and resumed their Northern Expedition. By May 11, the Japanese had occupied Jinan City without encountering any resistance.

⁶ Ogawa Yūzō, *Sainan jiken wo chūshin to shite* (Jinan Incident) (Jinan: Santō Shinpōsha, 1928).

Chinese sources maintain that the Jinan Incident was deliberately planned by the Japanese to obstruct the Northern Expedition. They claimed that the dismantling of Japanese defenses was intended to facilitate encounters with Chinese troops and, in fact, to provoke them. Apparently the Chinese had forgotten that it was *they* who had demanded that the Japanese dismantle them. Moreover, they recast Japanese goodwill in trusting Chiang Kai-shek's promise as malice. A Japanese garrison of 3,500 men could not hope to obstruct a Northern Expedition in which more than 100,000 Chinese troops participated. Furthermore, if the objective had been to impede that expedition, would not Japanese units have prevented the Southern Army from entering Jinan in the first place? When they attacked Jinan City, would the Japanese have taken the trouble to prepare an evacuation route for the Southern Army?

The resolution of the Jinan Incident was entrusted to diplomatic negotiations. After several twists and turns, it was finally resolved on March 28, 1929.

Accounts of the incident in every Japanese history textbook currently in use cite Japanese interference in the Northern Expedition as its cause. The Chinese have designated May 3 as the Day of National Humiliation, using it as yet another anti-Japanese propaganda tool. Still, it should be quite clear to an unbiased observer which side was the instigator.

Impressions of a diplomat on the scene

Where did responsibility for the Jinan Incident lie? With the Chinese? With the Japanese? Qingdao Consul General Fujita Eisuke, who was on the scene, described his impressions on May 13, in the wake of the incident.

Between 50,000 and 60,000 Southern Army troops arrived in Jinan between May 1 and the afternoon of May 2. They formed groups in various locations of the commercial port and Jinan city. Earlier, the withdrawal of Northern forces had been followed by the arrival of Southern Army soldiers in civilian clothing. Consequently, Japanese residents were moved to a safe area, where they were guarded. Also on May 2, we received the following request from Chiang Kai-shek.

- (1) I ask Japanese troops to withdraw immediately. I will, without fail, accept full responsibility for maintaining order in the Southern Army.
- (2) To demonstrate that the Japanese Army does not view the Southern Army as its enemy, do not establish a safety zone; dismantle all defensive structures, as they are not necessary."

Believing Chiang Kai-shek's proclamation, our soldiers removed their defensive structures. However, on the next day, May 3, Southern Army troops invaded the home of a Japanese resident. When attempts were made to restrain them, the Chinese opened fire. It is clear beyond any doubt that the Southern Army is to blame for the initiation of the incident.

Moreover, I am certain that the clash was premeditated in an organized manner from the start, and Japanese were singled out as targets because

- (1) When looting commenced, shots rang out simultaneously all over the commercial port, and soon total chaos reigned in the district.
- (2) Chinese troops possessed hand grenades.
- (3) Almost every home looted and plundered was Japanese; very few Chinese encountered any problems.

Japanese soldiers aimed their weapons at the Shandong Provincial Administrative Office and the city walls, where the Southern Army troops were located. They did no damage to Chinese residences, earning the gratitude of Chinese merchants, who praised the accurate aim of Japanese soldiers.

The fact that they rampaged while the Japanese were guarding the commercial port so diligently reveals the true character of Chinese troops. Their actions show how cruel they are. It is nigh impossible for us Japanese to summon up determination strong enough to remain calm while Chinese troops commit brutal acts and incite maniacal xenophobia.

I would like readers to be mindful that these are not the words of a soldier, but the candid impressions of a diplomat in his assigned territory. Surely readers can sense that it was not only military officials who advocated an assertive stance against the savagery of Chinese troops.

Foreign opinion supports Japan

Let us have a look at foreign opinion on the Jinan Incident. Here is an excerpt from the British *Daily Telegraph* newspaper (10 May 1928 edition).

The Chinese have been repeatedly committing acts of violence, as if they believed that pillaging and murder are their God-given rights. There is a limit to the patience even of the Japanese.

The article adds that the Japanese military acted in “self-defense.”

The French daily *Le Temps* also advocated for the Japanese:

Action taken by the Japanese was motivated solely by the desire to protect their compatriots residing in Jinan. There was absolutely no political motive. Indignation over actions taken in self-defense would be misplaced.

The Chinese Peking & Tientsin Times, a foreign-language newspaper in North China, was even more enthusiastic in its defense of the Japanese:

If not for the Japanese military, every foreigner in Tsinan [Jinan] would have been slaughtered. We owe a great deal to the Japanese. The Japanese military should secure and occupy Shantung province to prevent a recurrence of this tragedy.

Additionally, the May 7 edition of the *North China Daily News* carried an article that read, in part:

Having set aside all emotional prejudices, we have no choice but to conclude that it was the Chinese who incited the incident, and that the responsibility for the dangers ahead that resulted in so many casualties lies with them and them alone. ... The southern forces are quite adroit with their use of propaganda, but the world is well aware of China's recent propaganda campaigns. Some claim that the incident would not have arisen if Japanese troops had not been dispatched to Jinan. However, no one can say with any certainty that the situation would not have been more serious had the Japanese not been on the scene. Incidents that occurred frequently in the past are still fresh in our memories. If the Japanese government had left its citizens residing in Jinan to fend for themselves in the Southern Army's war zone, it would have been guilty of a serious dereliction of duty. When all is said and done, all impartial persons would conclude that the Chinese Southern Army bears the blame for this incident.

“Chinese Soldiers Provoke the Tsinan Incident”

Professor Charles Callan Tansill, a specialist in Far Eastern diplomatic history and a luminary among historians, begins the section in his book *Back Door to War* dealing with the Jinan Incident with the following heading: “Chinese Soldiers Provoke the Tsinan Incident.” Here are the opening paragraphs of that section.

On a few occasions Americans did view China through realistic eyes. This was particularly true with reference to the Tsinan Incident. On May 3, 1928, when Chinese Nationalist soldiers began widespread looting in the city of Tsinan, Japanese troops went into action against them. Four days later the Japanese commander in Tsinan sent an ultimatum to Chiang Kai-shek demanding the immediate withdrawal of Chinese armed forces from the city. When Chiang failed to comply with this demand, Japanese troops in Tsinan launched an attack upon the Chinese Army which resulted in considerable loss of life and property.

The Nationalist Government sent an appeal to the League of Nations declaring Japan to be the aggressor. In reply, Japan indicated her large interests in Shantung province and the considerable number of Japanese nationals who needed protection. The Peking and Tientsin *Times* was favorably impressed with this Japanese statement: “It is a model of what such statements should be. ... China has lost a great deal of the faith once reposed in her veracity by the false propaganda in which her immature and excited emissaries indulged.”

The attitude of a large section of the American press concerning the Tsinan Incident was significantly pro-Japanese. The *Washington Post* thought it would be expedient, before people grew excited over alleged Japanese aggression in China, to “inquire how and when the Nationalist faction acquired the right to call itself the government of China.” The *New York Herald-Tribune* believed that the incident indicated the “disappearance in China of even the semblance of national control and responsible government.” The *Philadelphia Inquirer* was of the opinion that “Tsinan had emphasized the lesson taught by Nanking ... Every Power concerned should show

a firm front.” The *San Francisco Chronicle* expressed the view that was commonly held throughout the United States: “Japan was forced to protect her people and property in Shantung.”⁷

American diplomat welcomes Japanese expedition

The US, to some extent, anticipated a clash between the Japanese and Chinese in the spring of 1928. American diplomats in China, who were racking their brains trying to protect US nationals residing in Jinan, welcomed the Japanese expedition to Shandong.

For instance, W. Roderick Dorsey, the US consul in Qingdao, reported that the arrival of Japanese troops “has brought a feeling of relief as it did last year, and this even among Chinese, especially those of the substantial class, notwithstanding the pro forma protests of the officials.”⁸

On May 3, after the incident erupted, the American consul empathized with Japan, and John V.A. MacMurray, US minister to China, also was convinced that the incident arose due to “the gross failure of the so-called Nationalist leaders to face realities and exercise their authority to avert the possibility of a clash with the Japanese.” MacMurray also expressed his opposition to mediation by the US because it would be interpreted as “an effort to champion Chinese ‘nationalism’ against Japanese ‘aggression.’”⁹

Ernest B. Price, the US Consul in Jinan, blamed “the poor discipline of Chinese troops for the outbreak of the incident.” He felt that the Japanese ultimatum of May 7 was justified due to the “presence of numerous bodies of Chinese troops in the immediate environs of the foreign settlement.” He respected the Japanese military for being careful to avoid firing at Chinese civilians.”¹⁰

European expresses gratitude to Japanese military

A foreigner, a European resident of Jinan, delivered a letter he had written to Dr. Makino Tōru, the director of Jinan Clinic. Dr. Makino then translated the letter into Japanese and forwarded it to Lt. Gen. Fukuda Hikosuke, commander of the 6th Division. The writer of the letter describes his personal impressions of the conflict between Japanese and Chinese troops as he witnessed it. This document is a particularly valuable resource as it is composed from a neutral perspective.

At 10:00 a.m. on May 3, shots rang out in Jinan. I did not know the reason for the shooting, but I thought, “the Southern Army must be attacking the Japanese.” After all, propaganda leaflets inciting violence against the Japanese had been displayed on every street, becoming more vehement with each posting. The Southern Army men

⁷ Charles Callan Tansill, *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1952), 85-87.

⁸ Iriye, *op. cit.*, 218.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 218-19.

may have imagined they were in a superior position, and capable of entering into combat with the Japanese. ... Since I have served in the military, when I observed the attitude of the Japanese soldiers, I knew at a glance that they would win this battle. When I saw the Japanese charging forward, I rejoiced. ... The Japanese soldiers were in a very difficult position, but their forceful charging, a technique peculiar to the Japanese, threw the Chinese into confusion. Looking at the scene before me, I was able to discern immediately the distinct difference between trained soldiers and a motley crew of Chinese. The Japanese officers I spoke to on the street were all very friendly, and their actions on the street were marked by fairness and justice. These are the same facts I heard everywhere from other Europeans.

The Japanese artillery repeatedly launched attacks on the city. During those attacks, looking at the traces afterward, I could see how carefully and accurately they had aimed their guns. In other words, Japanese soldiers went to great lengths to avoid injuring Chinese civilians.

In my opinion, although there were about 20,000 Southern Army troops in Jinan that day, they were frightened by the approximately 600 Japanese soldiers (not including men in the eastern defensive sector) and fled like scared rabbits. Prior to the confrontation they were exceedingly boastful and overconfident, but in the heat of the moment were so cowardly they were soon overpowered by two or three Japanese soldiers. In the eyes of the Europeans who live in the area, the arrival of Japanese troops in Jinan was indeed a blessing. I am certain that the Southern Army would have attacked not only Japanese, but also any and every foreigner. Many other Europeans to whom I spoke were of the same opinion. For protecting their lives and property, all European residents cannot help but feel grateful to the Japanese soldiers. We mourn the approximately 50 loyal and valiant Japanese officers and men who, having preserved the lives of their compatriots as well as those of other foreigners, will now rest here for all eternity.

Japan submits memorandum to League of Nations

On May 28, 1928 the Japanese Foreign Ministry submitted a memorandum to the League of Nations with the intention of informing its members about the Jinan Incident. I have reproduced some excerpts below.

(3) When recently the Southern Army commanded by General Chiang Kai-shek was advancing northward from Nanking in the direction of Tsinan, Japan dispatched her troops to Tsinan for the protection of 2,000 Japanese residents there.

It need scarcely be said that this dispatch of Japanese troops was a measure of self-protection rendered unavoidable by the above-mentioned state of affairs prevailing in China. In spite of this precautionary measure taken by Japan, some Southern soldiers looted a Japanese house. This outrage originated the whole incident.

The Southern troops then at Tsinan proceeded to attack the Japanese forces and residents at various places. They murdered over a dozen Japanese residents, including women, and plundered more than 100 Japanese houses. It is to be sincerely regretted that these outrages compelled the Japanese troops to resort to force for the protection of the Japanese residents.

The following points call for special attention in a survey of the circumstances attending the Tsinan Incident:

The unfortunate incident owes its origin to the fact that Southern soldiers looted the house of a Japanese resident and that they fired on the Japanese soldiers who went to the rescue.

Before the incident occurred the responsible officers of the Southern Army repeatedly declared that they would assume the responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order, and demanded the removal of the Japanese defense works.

The Japanese troops removed the defense works on the night which, it so happened, preceded the outbreak of the disturbances and some of the Japanese residents who had gone to places of safety returned home.

The incident occurred immediately after the Japanese defense works were removed. At the moment that happened, the Chinese troops in various places simultaneously began to attack the Japanese troops and to outrage and plunder the Japanese residents. This outrage and plunder were almost entirely confined to the Japanese.

These circumstances created the impression that the disturbance was designedly brought about by the Chinese, at least by the lower classes among them.

In the face of much difficulty the Japanese repeatedly established contact with the Chinese and arranged for the suspension of hostilities. On each occasion orders failed to be obeyed on the Chinese side and hostilities had necessarily to be continued.

As the Chinese troops, including "un-uniformed soldiers," fired indiscriminately under cover of any houses they could find, the Japanese troops had to engage in street fighting in the most difficult circumstances.

The brutalities which the Chinese soldiers committed on some of the resident Japanese men and women immediately after the incident occurred are so cruel that description of them is impossible.

It is alleged that the limit of twelve hours attached to the demand which was made by the Japanese commander on the 7th gave the Southern Army scarcely any time for consideration. It must be noted, however, that at that moment the circumstances were so urgent that the Japanese commander was convinced that, if there were any delay, sharp practice on the part of the Southern troops would find its opportunity, and place not only the Japanese residents but the Japanese troops themselves in the most dangerous position. His precaution was but natural in view of the faithlessness hitherto manifested on the Chinese side.¹¹

This memorandum was intended to describe Japan's official position on the incident to the international community. In a concise, restrained writing style it indicates accurately where the responsibility for the incident lies. It was obvious to an impartial observer whether Japan or China was to blame for the incident, no matter what sort of false rumors or counter-propaganda the Chinese attempted to spread.

¹¹ "Japan Gives League Her Case on Tsinan," *New York Times*, 30 May 1928.

Bitterness penetrates the hearts of the Japanese people

For those conversant with the origin of and the developments in the Jinan Incident, there is no need to debate about whether the blame lies with the Japanese or the Chinese. If it is true that the incident claimed the lives of more than a few Chinese civilians, then the responsibility for those casualties, without a doubt, rests with Chinese troops, who spread false rumors about the Japanese, violated the truce, and repeatedly engaged in acts of provocation. History has taught us that the Chinese were the cause of all such conflicts, and that Japan always bore the brunt of the consequences. The Jinan Incident was no exception.

The Japanese people, whether military or civilian, were shocked and filled with bitterness by the savagery that characterized the Jinan Incident, as it did the incidents in Nanjing and Hankou that preceded it as well. (I have already described the acts of brutality committed by Chinese troops during the Sino-Japanese War.) It was difficult *not* to believe that cruel and inhuman acts came naturally to the Chinese soldier.

The debate over whether what is now referred to as the Nanjing massacre of 1937 actually took place has continued for decades. But even supposing that there is some truth to the accusations, we must be mindful of the earlier Nanjing and Jinan incidents, the painful memories of which are engraved on the hearts and minds of all Japanese, as are anger and enmity. If the Nanjing and Jinan incidents, and the Tongzhou Incident (which I shall describe later) had not occurred, nothing remotely resembling the so-called Nanjing massacre would ever have occurred. It is this writer's firm belief that anyone bringing up the "Nanjing massacre" should not forget to mention the national tragedies that had occurred in that very same Nanjing, and in Jinan, more than 10 years earlier.

The truth about the "murder" of Chinese diplomat

During the Jinan Incident, the Chinese once again concocted a warped tale, which they then began to publicize widely. This work of fiction had Japanese soldiers massacring a Chinese diplomat. The plot: on the evening of May 3, Japanese soldiers stormed the office of the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs for Shandong in the commercial port of Jinan, and proceeded to slice off the ears and noses of newly arrived negotiator Cai Gongshi and 15 others with bayonets, and then murder them.

However, this story was quite different from the truth, which I shall now relate, referring to Japanese Foreign Ministry records. After the incident, the Japanese consul-general in Jinan interviewed Capt. Kiba of the 6th Company, 47th Infantry Regiment, which was directly involved in the incident. According to his testimony, "the 6th Co. was dispersed in front of the War Zone Administration Office building during a confrontation on the morning of May 3, engaged in combat with the enemy. When shots fired from the third floor of the building claimed the lives of two Japanese soldiers, our men fired back at the upper floors of the building (we did not know at that point that it was the War Zone Administrative Office), silencing the enemy's gunfire. It was after 7:00 p.m. when Capt. Kiba led the 2nd Platoon into the building to look for stragglers. During the search we were suddenly fired upon by men in civilian clothing armed with pistols; they had been hiding in the basement. We immediately stabbed or shot all 16 of them to death."

Capt. Kiba, who was present at the confrontation from beginning to end, firmly denied having committed any atrocities whatsoever. In the first place, they had no time to do so, and besides, it would have been nearly impossible to slice off noses or ears with bayonets, which are ill-suited to such activities. Ten days after the confrontation, Japanese soldiers accompanied by military police conducted an inspection of the War Zone Administration Office Building. They found rifles, swords, and 200 rifle bullets on the third floor. They also discovered 15 military caps, 20 uniforms, spent shell casings, and other materiel scattered around in the basement. They seized those items as evidence in the presence of police patrol officers and members of the Christian church opposite the building in question.¹²

The Chinese poured all their energy into publicizing the “massacre of a diplomat,” which they concocted on the basis of exactly two actual facts: the building in question was being used temporarily as a negotiating venue and Cai, one of the negotiators, just happened to be a diplomat.

But the Japanese were not provided with any notification to the effect that Cai Gongshi had been entrusted with the position of negotiator. At about noon on May 3, when the incident erupted, the acting consul, Nishida Kōichi, was conferring with Chiang Kai-shek at Southern Army headquarters in Jinan, at which time Chiang mentioned only that he had appointed Cai to serve as a negotiator in Jinan. However, the Japanese units that inspected the building were not privy even to that information. All they knew was that there were many Southern Army men holed up in the building, and that they were shooting at the building because they were being fired upon and had lost two men. They were taking legitimate military action.

Furthermore, the British consul at Jinan reassured Consul General Fujita: “This is just the Chinese propaganda that we’ve become accustomed to. I do not believe it.” Nevertheless, in the shooting of Cai the Chinese found the perfect anti-Japanese ammunition, about which they published articles in every Chinese newspaper, day after day. The Nanjing government went as far as to send an official letter to Cai’s family, announcing that it would present them with 1,000 yuan as a condolence gesture. Moreover, on May 20 in Nanjing a gathering was held to observe the martyrdom of Cai Gongshi. It was attended by more than 200 distinguished Chinese. Government representatives and others delivered speeches in which they said that to console Cai’s spirit, “we must prepare for revenge.” The atmosphere in the audience was one of extreme tension. Once again, Chinese propaganda had made a “fact” out of whole cloth.

Manchurian flag supplanted

The ultimate objective of the Northern Expedition was the defeat of Zhang Zuolin. The Japanese, who did not want the fighting to spread from Beijing over the Shanhai Pass into Manchuria, advised Zhang to retreat to his native Manchuria. The outcome the Japanese hoped for was a peaceful conclusion to the Northern Expedition, with Beijing’s being taken over by the NRA. But Zhang, who was convinced that he was fighting Japan’s battle against communist forces in Beijing, ignored the warning. He was unhappy that Japan was helping Chiang Kai-shek, who had succumbed to communist influence, while encouraging him, Zhang, to return to Manchuria. On

¹² Report from Acting Consul-general Nishida to Foreign Minister Tanaka dated May 20, 1928.

June 4, 1928, as the NRA finally neared Beijing, Zhang boarded a special train bound for Fengtian. A bomb planted by Japanese Guandong Army officers exploded, ending the life of Zhang Zuolin.

Prime Minister Tanaka had hoped that Chiang Kai-shek would take control of China (south of the Great Wall), and that Zhang Zuolin, once placed in charge of Manchuria, would protect Japanese interests there. When Tanaka heard the news of the disaster, he reportedly sighed deeply, and looking up at the heavens said, “I am finished!” But the Japanese military men on the scene and thus familiar with the anti-Japanese deeds of the Fengtian warlords, could not overcome their distrust of the head warlord Zhang Zuolin. It is not surprising that they arrived at the conclusion that the only way to protect Japanese residents in Manchuria and Japanese interests was to eliminate Zhang. In later years, Staff Officer Col. Kōmoto Daisaku, the mastermind of the assassination wrote, “There was only one solution to the Manchurian problem, and that was to kill the kingpin. It was enough just to obliterate one man: Zhang Zuolin.”¹³

Five days after Zhang’s death, the NRA entered Beijing. At that point the Northern Expedition ended, and the north and south were supposedly united.

Zhang Xueliang, the new young leader of Manchuria, could not forgive the Japanese for having killed his father. In December 1928 he replaced the five-colored Manchurian flag with the blue-and-white GMD banner and declared his allegiance to the Nanjing government. This event was thereafter referred to as the Northeast Flag Replacement.

Given their close relationship with Manchuria, the Japanese had been voicing strong opposition to Zhang Xueliang’s union with the Nanjing government, which had championed the anti-Japanese movement and the restoration of national sovereignty. But Xueliang had not consulted with the Japanese prior to his decision to replace the northeast flag. Furthermore, among the several thousand blue-and-white GMD flags displayed simultaneously in the three eastern provinces, red flags could already be seen here and there, eerie symbols of the communization of Manchuria. The fears instilled in the Japanese by the flag replacement were far from groundless.

¹³ Kōmoto Daisaku, “Watakushi ga Chō Sakurin wo koroshita” (I killed Zhang Zuolin), *Bungei Shunjū*, 32 (1954), 194-201; https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001797/files/56628_57514.html.