

## **Chapter 2: The true purpose of establishing the Nanking Safety Zone**

### **1. What is the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone**

#### **(1) The statement of establishment of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone**

In the previous chapter, I briefly explained that the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone (hereinafter, the International Committee) was established under the leadership of American missionaries. Now, let us go into details. A statement was issued at the time of the establishment of the International Committee:

An International Committee composed of nationals of Denmark, Germany, Great Britain and the United States, desires to suggest to the Chinese and Japanese authorities the establishment of a Safety Zone for Civilian Refugees, in the unfortunate event of hostilities at or near Nanking.

The international Committee will undertake to secure from the Chinese authorities specific guarantees that the proposed Safety Zone would be made free and kept free from military establishments and offices, including those of communications; from the presence of armed men other than civil police with pistols; and from the passage of soldiers or military officers in any capacity. (Statement of the International Committee for the Safety Zone, November 22, 1937).<sup>1</sup>

As clearly seen from this statement, the purpose of the International Committee was to establish and maintain a safety zone for Chinese civilian refugees and the members of the Committee are nationals of Denmark, Germany, Great Britain and the United States.

Now, let us look again at the list of twenty-two Westerners who remained behind in Nanjing. They are Germans, an Austrian, Russians and Americans. Among the members of the International Committee, only Germans and Americans remained in Nanjing with Chinese civilians. A Dane and Briton, who were listed in the Committee membership list, left. (Briton Mr. Shields left the International Committee and acted on his own in Nanjing.) The International Committee for the Safety Zone was formed for the protection and safety of the civilian population at the time of the battle. However, not a few of the Committee members withdrew at the most crucial time, when the battle was about to start and the protection of civilians was most needed. I cannot help but wonder what kind of organization this committee was.

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<sup>1</sup> The Nanking Massacre Archival Project: Document, Yale University Library, NMP0125

So then what happened? Let us survey the situation at the time through statements of those who were directly involved.

“An International Committee has been formed, made up primarily of American doctors from Kulou Hospital and professors from Nanking University, all missionaries.”<sup>2</sup>

Shields says “When it was started, things were already pretty much agreed upon; he was invited in obviously to cast an international glow over something in fact quite partisan.”<sup>3</sup>

The main members of the International Committee were American missionaries and at the time of its establishment, an agreement was almost completed. Formally, Westerners, other than Americans, were invited to join the Committee to make it a look like an international organization. To the Americans, it made no difference in the operation of the Committee whether non-American members were present or not and, consequently, the Dane and the Britons held nominal membership.

## **(2) Chairman Rabe’s position**

Moreover, the American missionaries managed to elect Mr. Rabe, a German businessman, chairman of the International Committee.

“Five p.m. meeting of the International Committee for Establishing a Neutral Zone for Noncombatants in Nanking. They elect me chairman. My protests are to no avail. I give in for the sake of a good cause.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the German, Rabe, set up as chairman and totally lulled by American missionaries, worked laboriously for America and the American missionaries. He led the International Committee, like a puppet, as Chancellor Scharffenberg of the German Embassy points out:

“In my view, Herr Rabe as its chairman has indeed achieved extraordinary things, but he has let himself be lulled far too much by the Americans and is helping promote American interests and

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Rabe, *The Goodman of Nanking*, edited by Erwin Wickert, Little, Brown and Company, London, 1999, p.25. (Originally published in German by Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt GmbH, Stuttgart, in 1997 as *Der gute Deutsche von Nanking*.)

<sup>3</sup> Cabot Coville, *Diaries of Cabot Coville 1938*, Hoover Institution Archive, p.34

<sup>4</sup> Rabe, *Ibid.*, p.27.

missionaries who are out to catch souls *en gros*.”<sup>5</sup>

While having a German chairman and pretending to be an international organization, the International Committee was in fact a body of American missionaries. Readers should now realize this fact.

### **(3) Concealment of control by American missionaries**

This group of American missionaries was concerned about appearing as “an international organization” and they endeavored to conceal the fact that the International Committee was actually controlled by American missionaries. Here is an interesting statement by missionary Bates at the Tokyo Trials:

This committee was organized at first with a Danish chairman, with German, British, and American members. But because foreign governments withdrew almost all of their nationals from the city, there were at the time of the Japanese attack only Germans and Americans remaining upon it. The chairman was a distinguished German merchant, Mr. John Rabe.<sup>6</sup>

As we learn from Rabe’s diary, the International Committee was formed on November 19, 1937, and “made up primarily of American doctors from Kulou Hospital and professors from Nanking Universities, all missionaries.” The Dane did not appear to be a key member. And three days later, on November 22, Mr. Rabe was elected chairman. It was in December that individual governments ordered their nationals to leave Nanjing. Mr. Bates said that at first the Dane was the chairman, but since Danish nationals were ordered to leave Nanjing, Mr. Rabe became chairman, in the place of the Dane. However, this is clearly false. In the first place, a Dane would have never been elected chairman under any circumstance. Mr. Bates never stated the fact that the International Committee was established and led by American missionaries during the Tokyo Trials. This was the consistent attitude taken by the American missionaries, while concealing as much as possible, the fact that the International Committee was controlled by American missionaries.

Oddly, Mr. Rabe, who decided to remain behind in Nanjing as chairman of the International Committee, by the way of the American embassy, received a telegram from his company, Siemens China Co. on February 13, 1938, which was dated December 1, 1937, requesting that he leave

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<sup>5</sup> Rabe, *Ibid.*, p.189-190.

<sup>6</sup> Zhang Kaiyuan ed., *Eyewitness to Massacre*, M. E. Sharpe, New York, 2001, p.60.

Nanking immediately. Mr. Rabe finally left Nanjing after the Safety Zone was officially ordered to dissolve. In his diary, Mr. Rabe was repentant for having disobeyed his company's order to immediately return home, of which he knew nothing.

The question is why a company telegram ordering Mr. Rabe to leave Nanjing was delivered to Mr. Rabe more than two months after-the-fact by the American embassy. The fact is that the American embassy thought it unwise for Americans to take full responsibility for the Safety Zone.<sup>7</sup> Taking this into consideration, we can assume that the telegram sent by Siemens Co., ordering Mr. Rabe to return home may have been intentionally suppressed by the American missionaries in order to have Mr. Rabe remain in Nanjing. All the while, the American missionaries involved the American embassy in their conspiracy.

#### **(4) A list of members of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone**

Finally, let us examine members of the International Committee cited in Rabe's diary (November 30, 1937).<sup>8</sup>

NAME	NATIONALITY	ADDRESS
John Rabe, Chairman [1]	German	Siemens China Co.
Lewis S. C. Smythe, Secretary [16]	American	University of Nanking
P.H. Munro-Faure	British	Asiatic Petroleum Co.
Rev. John Magee [21]	American	American Church Mission
P.R. Shields	British	International Export Co.
J.M. Hansen	Danish	Texaco
G. Schultze-Pantin	German	Shingming Trading Co.
Iver Mackay	British	Butterfield & Swire
J. V. Pickering	American	Standard Oil Co.
Eduard Sperling [2]	German	Shanghai Insurance
Dr. M.S. Bates [14]	American	University of Nanking
Rev. W. P. Mills [18]	American	Presbyterian Mission
J. Lean	British	Asiatic Petroleum Co.
Dr. C.S. Trimmer [9]	American	University of Nanking
Christian Kröger [3]	German	Carlowitz of Nanking

<sup>7</sup> "Nankin jiken shiryō-shū I, Amerika kankei shiryō-hen" [*Nanking Incident source material I: American References*] p. 123)

<sup>8</sup> Rabe, *Ibid.*, p.43.

George Fitch [20]

American

YMCA

- The parenthesized numbers (inserted by the author) refer to the afore-cited list of twenty-two Westerners remaining in Nanjing.
- In the list of members of the International Committee submitted to Japanese authorities by the International Committee, Mr. Kröger and Mr. Fitch, who are at the bottom of the list, are deleted and instead, Mr. Riggs (American) appears.<sup>9</sup> On confirming the list of Organization of Safety Zone Administration in Rabe's Diary (German version), we learn that Mr. Kröger is listed as Treasurer and Mr. Fitch as Director, and both are active members of the International Committee. Therefore, we cite here as shown above, the list of members cited in Rabe's diary.

By comparing this with the list of the twenty-two Westerners remaining in Nanjing (shown in Chapter 1), we can clearly see that seven out of the sixteen members left the International Committee before the Safety Zone began its operation.

## **2. Characteristics of the Nanking Safety Zone**

Now that readers understand that the International Committee in charge of the Nanking Safety Zone was nothing more than a group of American missionaries, we now examine the Nanking Safety Zone, established and administered by Americans. The Nanking Safety Zone, which was set up under the leadership of the American missionaries in the event of hostilities at or near Nanking, took after the Shanghai Safety Zone. The latter was established to secure civilian safety in Shanghai during the Battle of Shanghai. So, first, let us look at the Shanghai Safety Zone and then examine the characteristics of the Nanking Safety Zone.

### **(1) The Shanghai Safety Zone**

When the Battle of Shanghai broke out on August 13, 1937, the Shanghai Safety Zone was established, led by Father Robert Jacquinet de Besange (the Society of Jesus) of France with the purpose of protecting civilians in the event of hostilities, supported by the French Army in the adjacent Shanghai French Concession, and promising neutrality and demilitarization within the zone. The establishment was approved by both the Japanese and Chinese authorities. It is also called the "Jacquinet Zone".

In general, a demilitarized and neutral zone is established after consultation between the belligerents

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<sup>9</sup> *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, 1939, Kelly and Welsh, p. 3.

and agreement is reached. However, in the case of Shanghai, the Safety Zone was unique in that it was led by Father Jacquinet of France, a nonbelligerent third party, after consulting with both Japan and China. Furthermore, the concept of a demilitarized, neutral zone for the protection of civilians emerged mainly among European states after World War I. This concept materialized for the first time with Father Jacquinet's "Safety Zone." In this sense, the Shanghai Safety Zone is Father Jacquinet's invention. Barricades were set up to separate the Safety Zone from the rest of the city area and the entrance to the Zone was administered by the French Army. When the Battle of Shanghai broke out, it is said that more than 250,000 civilians took shelter in the Zone.

Let me briefly describe the French Concession in Shanghai and the situation related to Catholics in China.

The Shanghai Concession at the time was divided into the joint concession, mainly administered by Great Britain and the United States, and the French Concession. The French Concession was administered by France. At the time of Taiping Rebellion (1850 – 1864), it was suggested that the French Concession temporarily join the joint concession. However, France did not want to be under British leadership and remained independent. The French Concession was about half as large as the joint concession and France was powerful enough to maintain her concession on her own. Since the Concession was administered solely by France, it bore unique and strong despotic characteristics.

There were three million Catholics in China at the time headed by the French Catholic Church. Furthermore, French Catholics had special status within China—they providing missionaries from other countries with entrance permits into inner China.

Given such a background, relying on the French military in the adjacent French Concession and using his position as a priest with three million Chinese Catholics behind him, together with his personal connections and credit, Father Jacquinet successfully established the Shanghai Safety Zone. Both Japan and China officially acknowledged the Jacquinet Zone, which came into effect on November 9, 1937. It is also recorded that Shanghai Detachment Commander General Matsui Iwane, in sympathy with Father Jacquinet's cause of protecting civilians, personally donated ten thousand yen (current value of about two hundred thousand dollars).

## **(2) The Nanking Safety Zone**

By contrast, the Nanking Safety Zone was established mainly by American Protestant missionaries, modeled after the Shanghai Safety Zone. In China, at that time, there were about 3 million Catholics led by France compared to about 0.5 million Protestants led by the United States and Britain. The

difference in numbers between these denominations is apparent. Though the number of Chinese Protestants increased from nearly fifty thousand at the end of the nineteenth century, they were still a minority compared to the Catholics.

While the purpose of the Nanking Safety Zone was protecting civilians at the time of hostilities, similar to the Shanghai Safety Zone did, unlike the Shanghai Safety Zone, the Nanking Safety Zone was set up in the area where there was Chinese artillery and there were no barricades to separate the zone from the rest of the city. The only signs of demarcation of the zone were white flags hoisted against buildings located at the boundary. Moreover, unlike the Shanghai Safety Zone, there was no third-party military presence nearby. For these reasons, the Japanese authorities noted that it was difficult to establish a neutral, demilitarized zone in the designated area and so they were unable to consent. Japanese authorities also noted that if there no troops or military facilities were within the Zone, then they themselves would endeavor to avoid attacking the Zone.

In terms of international law, a neutral, demilitarized zone cannot be established without agreement from both sides. That is, the Nanking Safety Zone, unlike the Shanghai Safety Zone, was not a properly constituted neutral, demilitarized zone and therefore, held no guarantees or official sanction.

By the way, Chiang Kai-shek consented to both the Shanghai and Nanking Safety Zones, but strangely enough, he donated food and money only to the Nanking Safety Zone. I will later point out his reason for doing so.

### **(3) Unapproved Nanking Safety Zone**

Unlike the Shanghai Safety Zone, Japanese authorities did not consent to a Nanking Safety Zone and so it was an unofficial zone. This fact was made clear by Marcia Ristaino's book *Jacquinot Safety Zone: Wartime Refugees in Shanghai*, as "Nanking Safety Zone unapproved" (p. 81). Curiously, this fact is not commonly known. So, this book shows readers a fact of the Nanking Safety Zone.

The International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone first secured approval from the Chinese authorities about establishing the Safety Zone and then through the good offices of Pater Jacquinot, the Committee asked the Japanese authorities to approve the Nanking Safety Zone. The Committee received the following reply through Father Jacquinot (Reply from Father Jacquinot to the International Committee, December 2, 1937).

“Japanese authorities have duly noted request for safety zone but regret cannot grant it. In the event of Chinese forces misbehavior toward civilians and/or property cannot assume responsibility but they themselves will endeavor to respect the district as far as consistent with military necessity. Jacquinet”<sup>10</sup>

The fact that the Nanking Safety Zone was unsanctioned and therefore unofficial is very important in considering the status and activities of the American missionaries as the original text indicates.

Incidentally, the fact that this Safety Zone was unsanctioned means that the Safety Zone was not actually a “safety zone.” In other words, the Nanking Safety Zone was fictitious. It thus follows that the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone was also fictitious. In light of fact, only the American missionaries and their intimate people claimed that there was a Safety Zone. Therefore, when they decided to dissolve it or change its name, they did not need anyone’s permission at all. The American missionaries simply declared that the International Committee for the Safety Zone became a Relief Committee for refugees.

In fact, the appellation “Safety Zone” was used by a very limited number of people among American missionaries at that time. The Japanese authorities called it “*nan min ku*” (refugee zone) and the Chinese similarly called it “*Nan Min Chu*.” Missionary Mills writes:

“In Chinese we always called the Zone “Nan Min Chu” – a place for the poor people or refugees.” (January 22, 1938, Mill’s letter to his wife Nina)<sup>11</sup>

The members of the International Committee, mainly American missionaries, used the appellation “safety zone” only with respect to documents and international propaganda. In Nanjing at that time, the appellation and the real nature of the Zone was a “refugee zone,” simply a place refugees gathered .

Readers now understand the actual status of the “Safety Zone,” but I will continue to use “safety zone” merely for convenience’s sake.

### **3. The true purpose of establishing the Nanking Safety Zone was to support the Chinese Army**

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<sup>10</sup> Rabe, *Ibid.*, p.46

<sup>11</sup> Zhang Kaiyuan, *Ibid.*, p.245.



**(1) The recognition of the Nanking Safety Zone commonly shared by Mr. Shields and the Japanese authorities**

So far, we have seen that the Nanking Safety Zone and the International Committee for the Zone were established mainly by the American missionaries in Nanking with the purpose of protecting civilians in the event of hostilities.

Shields says “The Nanking safety zone was a mistake. Nominally, for civilian protection, it was really for American, German, and wealthy Chinese property. The Chinese had a large anti-aircraft gun in it even before it was defined; they continued to use it.”<sup>12</sup>

It is interesting that the Japanese authorities had a similar view:

“Appearing to be a philanthropizing organization and avoiding public suspicion, in fact, they are intent on making profits for themselves, while they win over refugees and take various actions which seemingly obstruct smooth development of the Autonomous Committee. Moreover, such attitudes tend to be used by discontented factions...”<sup>13</sup>

To sum up, views in common with both parties are:

- 1) Protection of civilians is least important,
- 2) The true purpose is protection of property and profits,
- 3) At the same time, it resulted in profiting the Chinese Army (including lawless soldiers).

Then, what was the true intention behind establishing the Safety Zone and the International Committee? Let us find the answer from records of meetings of the American missionaries, the very party concerned:

**(2) Missionary Mills’ confession**

The following is the notes from a meeting of the American missionaries held one day before the first meeting of the International Committee, to be held on November 19, 1937, to set up the Safety Zone, to report on a plan. This is a very important record, indeed:

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<sup>12</sup> Cabot Coville, *Diaries of Cabot Coville 1938*, Hoover Institution Archive, p.34

<sup>13</sup> Report of the Special Duty Agency, January 21, 1938 ( *Nanking “Gyakusatsu” kenkyu no saizensen [Frontline of the study of Nanking “Massacre,”]* Nihon “Nanking Society” yearly report, 2004. Tendensha. pp. 74-75.

“Confidential. At our meeting Mr. Mills expressed the longing that instead of having all educated people trek westward that it would be far better for a group to go down and try to encourage and comfort the Chinese army and help them to see what disorder and looting among even a small group means to China.”<sup>14</sup> (Vautrin, November 18, 1937)

Thus, the American Missionaries want to support and protect the Chinese army as a part of their religious mission. First, let me describe Mr. Mills, who expressed longing to “encourage and comfort the Chinese army.”

Mr. Wilson Plumer Mills was born in 1883 in South Carolina. After receiving a B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1912, Mr. Mills served in the YMCA in China from 1912 to 1931 and then with the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board in Nanking from 1933 to 1949. The Presbyterian Church is one of the most influential churches in the United States.<sup>15</sup> At the time of the Battle of Nanking in 1937, Mr. Mills was 54 years old, many years senior to Mr. Bates, 40, and Mr. Smythe, 36.

“I must tell you that Mr. Mills is the man—who originally had the idea of creating the Safety Zone.” (Address of Mr. John H. D. Rabe at a Farewell Party given by Staff of the Nanking Safety Zone, Feb. 21, 1938. Yale)<sup>16</sup>

As clearly seen from Mr. Rabe’s speech above, Mr. Mills conceived of establishing the Nanking Safety Zone and the International Committee.

“My suggestion to name Mr. Mills vice chairman, and/or acting chairman is accepted.” (Rabe, February 18, 1938)<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, after Mr. Rabe, who had been chairman, left Nanking, Mr. Mills became chairman of the successor to the International Committee (called the Nanking International Relief Committee). In addition, when Mr. Bates worked on publishing *What War Means* with Mr. Timperley, Mr. Bates took the trouble to check the contents of the book with Mr. Mills, although the latter’s records are

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<sup>14</sup> Vautrin, *Ibid.*, p.74

<sup>15</sup> Zhang Kaiyuan, *Ibid.*, p.243.

<sup>16</sup> <https://web.library.edu/divinity/nanking/documents/NMP0210>

<sup>17</sup> Rabe, *Ibid.*, p.200.

not included in the book. These facts indicate that Mr. Mills was the leading figure among the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone and the American missionaries in Nanjing. Mr. Mills also appears frequently in diaries of Miss Vautrin and Mr. Rabe, which shows how energetically Mr. Mills acted in Nanjing.

However, published documents related to Mr. Mills are rare, compared with those of Mr. Bates and Mr. Smythe. For instance, while Mr. Mills wrote mission reports in collaboration with Mr. Bates, sometimes the final edition carried only Mr. Bates' signature.<sup>18</sup> Within the American missionaries' organization in Nanjing, while Mr. Bates was in charge of refugee camps and its publicity, and Mr. Smythe was in charge of business matters in general, Mr. Mills was accountable for virtually the entire operation but behind the scenes.

Now, let us examine Mr. Mills' expressed longing, as quoted above. His view indicates several important points.

First, note the date when he expressed his longing to encourage and comfort the Chinese army. It was on November 18, 1937. The Japanese Army's all-out attack on Nanking was on December 10, 1937, and they breached the walls of Nanking on December 13. Thus Mr. Mills' longing (that "it would be far better to try to encourage and comfort the Chinese army and help them to see what disorder and looting among even a small group means to China) had nothing to do with the Japanese Army's actions in Nanking his longing was expressed almost a month before the Battle of Nanking started.

Second, as we noted Mr. Mills position at that time, this statement, made by the leader of American missionaries in Nanking and within the American missionaries' inner circle, indicates, as a consensus of the American missionaries in Nanking, a clear intention of encouraging and helping the Chinese army.

Third, this statement was made on the day before the establishment of the International Committee for the Safety Zone and at the meeting to announce the establishment of the Committee by the person who first conceived the idea of the safety zone. This, in fact, was a declaration of the Mr. Mills' longing to encourage and help the Chinese army in a neutral, demilitarized safety zone, allegedly established for civilian protection.

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<sup>18</sup> *Nanking jiken shiryoshu I [Materials related to the Nanking Incident, I] Amerika kankei shiryohen [American references] p. 185.*

Clearly, both neutrality and support for either side is paradoxical. In the first place, neutrality and demilitarization are necessary for sanctioning a safety zone. Neglecting such essential requirements, to express support for the Chinese army is sheer prejudice. It is tantamount to a sports referee stating beforehand that he will side with either team.

Also, as a matter of fact, to support the Chinese army within the safety zone where civilians gathered is to expose civilians to military danger. Mr. Mills' statement indicates that the true purpose for the establishment of the Safety Zone by American missionaries and establishment of the International Committee was not the protection of civilians but supporting and protection the Chinese army.