

Chapter 4: The Structural Outline of International Propaganda of the Nanjing Incident

1. Cooperative relationship between the American missionaries and the Chinese for international propaganda

Previously, I clearly pointed out the cooperative relationship between the American missionaries and the Chinese at Nanjing. Now, I would like to explain this cooperative relationship in terms of international propaganda of the Nanjing Incident.

(1) *What War Means*

First, let us examine the book *What War Means—Japanese Terror in China*, which we referred to in identifying the original disseminators of the Nanjing Incident. Among Chinese documents at the time, “An Overview of Propaganda Operations of the International Bureau of the Central Propaganda Division of the Nationalist Party from 1938 to April 1941” clearly mentioned that *What War Means* was a book of propaganda written in the fight against the enemy, written by the International Bureau of the Central Propaganda Division of the Nationalist Party.¹ In short, *What War Means* was an anti-Japanese propaganda book, edited and published by China.

In addition, Mr. Zeng Xu-bai, former director of the International Propaganda Bureau, writes in his autobiography:

“To begin with, we decided to pay Timperley and Smythe via Timperley to write two books as eyewitnesses to Japanese military’s massacre in Nanking, print and publish them.”²

The two books here refer to *What War Means* by Timperley and *War Damage in the Nanking Area* by missionary Smythe. As mentioned previously, records of the Nanjing Incident in *What War Means* are the records made by American missionaries and case files compiled by the International Committee. After all, the latter comes from the former, records of American missionaries, as I have already shown.

By the way, Mr. Timperley was a member of the “Committee to Fight the Enemy,” established after the Shanghai Incident, according to *Autobiography of Zeng Xubai* (p. 200). Thus, Timperley had a

¹ *Nankin gyakusatsu kenkyu no saizensen [Front line of the Nanking Massacre Research]*, 2003 edition, pp. 264-265)

² *The Autobiography of Zeng Xu-bai*, first volume. Renkei Shuppan Company, Taipei, 1987. p. 201.

cooperative relationship with China even before the Battle of Nanking.

This means that in publishing *What War Means*, the Chinese Nationalist Party's International Propaganda Bureau provided money and had their agent Timperley come up with a book compiling records written by American missionaries. It is also known that in this project, the American missionaries joined in editing the book, as shown in the letters exchanged between Timperley and Bates.³

(2) Missionary Fitch's travels across America giving talks about the Nanjing Incident

It is a well-known fact that missionary Fitch travelled throughout the United States giving talks about the Nanjing Incident and showed documentary films taken by missionary Magee. Mr. Tsuchida Tetsuo pointed out that China's International Propaganda Bureau took part in this demonstration in his book *Jukei kokuminseifu si no kenkyu* [*Study on the History of the Chinese Nationalist Government in Chungking*]⁴

By the way, in an article that reported missionary Fitch's lectures conducted along with the showing of Magee's films throughout the United States, Mr. Fitch is named as "advisor in the War Service Corps under appointment from Chiang Kai-shek at the beginning of the siege of Nanking."⁵ Mr. Fitch supposedly introduced himself as such in at meetings. In his autobiography *My Eight Years in China* (revised edition, p. 83) Mr. Fitch stated that he was an advisor to the Chinese War Area Service Corps. As mentioned earlier, the War Area Service Corps was a wartime service unit (including propaganda activities) led by Mr. Huang Jen Lin. In the first place, both Mr. Huang Jen Lin and Mr. Fitch played major roles in Chinese YMCA and were longtime close friends.

I am not sure whether Mr. Fitch's anti-Japan propaganda within the United States was at the request of the International Propaganda Bureau or a part of activities as advisor to the War Area Service Corps. In either case, the Chinese Government backed missionary Fitch and disseminated propaganda against Japan using the Nanjing Incident.

(3) Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone

Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone, compiled by the International Committee for the Safety Zone

³ Yale. <https://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/nanking/documents>, NMP0092~NMP0012.

⁴ Compiled by Ishijima Noriyuki and Kubo Ryo, University Tokyo Press, 2004, p. 133.

⁵ *The Oakland Tribune* of June 12, 1938.

disseminated from Nanjing at that time cases of disorder allegedly caused by the Japanese military. At the beginning, it states, "Prepared under the Auspices of the Council of International Affairs, Chungking." Clearly, this book was published under the instruction of the Government of the Republic of China. Editor Shushi Hsu, Ph.D. was a Chinese Protestant (Presbyterian) and this can be confirmed by Mr. Shushi's contribution to *The China Christian Year Book 1934-35*.

Documentation of cases of disorder recorded and disseminated by American missionaries were edited by a Chinese Protestant pastor and published under the supervision of the Chinese Government. Here, then is another example of an extremely close tie between the American missionaries and the Chinese Government.

What is common with the stated facts is that the American missionaries were totally responsible for preparing records related to the Nanjing Incident, while China backed the Americans in disseminating the records to the rest of the world. With respect to what was disseminated, China was merely involved in the editing process, totally out of touch with what the American missionaries really wrote. This is a standard method the Chinese use in producing international propaganda.

2. China's international propaganda policy

(1) Intentions of respective Chinese in charge of China's international propaganda

Now, let us examine China's policy of implementing international propaganda. Chiang Kai-shek said that "diplomacy is intangible warfare" and emphasized the importance of international propaganda. Let me introduce the intentions of respective Chinese in charge of international propaganda operations.

In China, the major figure engaged in the international propaganda was Mr. Hollington K. Tong (Tung Hsien kuang), deputy director at the Central Propaganda Division (at the time of appointment, director of the Fifth Division of the Military Committee, in charge of propaganda). He was entirely responsible for international propaganda. Division directors changed many times for political reasons, but Deputy Director Hollington was immortal.

Now, let me describe Mr. Hollington K. Tong based on his autobiography, *A Farmer's Autobiography*, published by Taiwan Shinseifo (hereinafter, *Hollington K. Tong Autobiography*).

Mr. Hollington K. Tong was born in 1887 in Zhejiang province to a Christian (Protestant) family. Incidentally, he was born in the same year and in the same province as Chiang Kai-shek. Moreover, when Mr. Hollington K. Tong became an English teacher at a junior high school at Fenghua at young

age due to family matters, Chiang Kai-shek was also at that school—another strange coincidence. In later years, Mr. Hollington majored in journalism at University of Missouri and obtained a Master's degree at Columbia University. After graduation, he worked as a reporter and after 1929, he became president and editor-in-chief at the *The China Press* an English-language newspaper in Shanghai, busy as a civilian reporter. In 1935 he retired from *The China Press* due to illness and then he was picked by the Chinese Nationalist Party Government to check foreign reporting on China. Later, in October 1937, he was appointed to head the Nationalist Party Government's international propaganda. I quote how he defined his role at that time:

“My responsibility is to go beyond keeping foreign correspondents from reporting [inconvenient things] further to persuading foreigners into adopting what we want to say and making it look as if they voluntarily and willingly write what we want them to write.”⁶

It is clear here how the Chinese evolved from merely checking foreign reporting to using foreigners to promote their international propaganda.

Mr. Zeng Xu-bai, who worked as head of the International Propaganda Bureau under Deputy Director Hollington K. Tong, clearly stated the Chinese policy of international propaganda at the time:

“Regarding our international propaganda at this time, we decided that we Chinese will never appear in front on our part but search for foreign friends who understand the truth of our fight and political goal and let them speak for us.”⁷

In summary, China intended to push foreigners up front and have them speak for the Chinese. Readers will know that this is exactly what Mr. Hollington K. Tong intended. In addition, regarding the targets of China's propaganda operations, Mr. Hollington K. Tong states:

“In Shanghai [at the time of the Battle of Shanghai], I determined the target of our propaganda operation. That was foreigners residing in Shanghai. Let this small number of foreigners disseminate what they saw during the battle fought between China and Japan to their people at home across the Ocean and make it an international opinion. The most influential among them are

⁶ *Hollington K. Tong Autobiography*, p. 71.

⁷ *Zeng Xu-bi Autobiography*, Volume 1, p. 201.

people in the English-language states.”⁸

It is clear here that the Chinese thought it was important to both create global opinion through foreigners residing in China and to disseminate their propaganda to English-speaking countries through foreigners residing in China.

Now, readers know something about Mr. Hollington K. Tong and Mr. Zeng Xu-bai, two major figures engaged in China’s international propaganda operations. There is one more important figure in China’s international propaganda and that would be Soong Mei-ling, or Madame Chiang Kai-shek.

Now let me introduce Soong Mei-ling, referring to the book, *So shimai [The Soong Sisters]*⁹

Soong Mei-ling was born in 1898 in Shanghai, the third daughter of Mr. Charlie Soong and Mrs. Ni Kwei-tseng. At the age of ten, she followed her older sisters Soong Ching-ling (later to be the wife of Sun Yat-sen) and Soong Ai-ling to the United States. She studied at Wesleyan College in Georgia and Wellesley College in Massachusetts and returned home to China when she was twenty. Naturally, she was an excellent speaker of English. Wellesley College is a prestigious college outside of Boston and is Hillary Clinton’s alma mater. Soong Mei-ling married Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 in Shanghai. It is said that as conditions of their marriage, Chiang Kai-shek was required to divorce his then wife (Chen Jieru) and convert to Christianity.

Soong Mei-ling had a clear vision for international propaganda. In fact, it was Soong Mei-ling that strongly recommended Mr. Hollington K. Tong to the post in charge of international propaganda. Let us examine her thinking.

Madame Chiang [Soong Mei-ling] understood best in the Government how important it was to be favorably treated by American newspapers, to China on the edge of national crisis of life and death. Madame Chiang was educated in the United States since she was very young and through her study and activities there, she came to be greatly admired and respected by American political dignitaries. In result, she was able to observe the psychology of Americans clearly and correctly. She always censored a huge number of American publications and paid discrete attention to how

⁸ *Hollington K. Tong Autobiography*, p.73.

⁹ *So shimai [The Soong Sisters]* written by Ito Jun and Ito Shin, Kadokawa shoten, Tokyo, 1998.

the American Government and people see various Chinese issues.¹⁰

It is a clear fact that Soong Mei-ling, who had tremendous influence over Chiang Kai-shek's diplomacy, was keen on winning favorable American public opinion of China.

(2) Chiang Kai-shek's instruction to effectively manage international propaganda

Now that readers have a rough understanding of China's international propaganda, let us go into specific instructions given by Chiang Kai-shek. The following explanation is based on Mr. Tsuchida Tetsuro's research, "China's anti-Japan strategy and the Nationalist Party Government's diplomacy toward the United States" (*Study on History of the Chinese Nationalist Government in Chungking*, pp. 133-134).

In February 1938, Chiang Kai-shek issued an order to send a mission to the United States, aiming to "incite sympathetic American public opinion toward China and urge the U.S. Government to take sanctions against Japan" through exhibiting photos of Japanese military atrocities and showing a movie made in China. To the generalissimo's order, Mr. Hollington K. Tong proposed the following:

- A. Send Chang Peng-Chun (famed theatrical expert) to the United States and have him engage in propaganda operation,
- B. Send Earl Leaf (former *United Press International* reporter, employed by the Chinese Government) and have him establish American Branch of the Central Propaganda Division,
- C. Employ American missionary Frank Price [Translator of Sun Yat-sen's *The Three Principles of the People*], have him widely distribute Chinese propaganda materials in Washington, D. C. and invite American notables everywhere to publicize and speak using the materials,
- D. Search for as many as possible American missionaries in battle zones in China and send them back to the United States and have them speak on their experiences,
- E. Ask American reporters in Hankow [China's capital after the surrender of Nanking] to disseminate news favorable to China and ask foreigners there to write a book describing Japanese military atrocities and publish it.

In fact, the Chinese carried out all of these proposals. In addition, the Chinese provided money and established the "American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression" within the United States and eventually succeeded in turning American public opinion in favor of China and having the American Government place export bans against Japan. The series of China's anti-Japan

¹⁰ *Hollington K. Tong autobiography*, p. 71.

propaganda operations precisely followed large-scale propaganda strategy they had set forth.

Proposals (D) and (E) would apply to propaganda conducted related to the Nanjing Incident. It is now clear that Mr. Fitch's tours across America, speaking about the Nanjing Incident, showing Magee's films and the publication of Mr. Timperley's anti-Japan book *What War Means—Japanese Terror in China*, were carried out under these proposals.

(3) Position of the Nanjing Incident in China's international propaganda strategy

Here, I would like to emphasize that China's anti-Japan propaganda, as clearly shown by Chiang Kai-shek's involvement and statements by the Chinese in charge of international propaganda, was not limited to the Nanjing Incident. Referring to propaganda related to the Nanjing Incident, Mr. Hollington K. Tong reflected:

“Regarding these atrocities [the Nanjing Incident], although there was no actual sanction imposed by the European and American Governments, sympathies all over the world came toward us and these countries accused, in unison, inhuman atrocities committed by aggressive Japan, which enabled us to favorably carry out our propaganda operations from now on.”¹¹

In summary, China's Nanjing Incident propaganda turned out to be very effective, but it was only one of various propaganda operations China conducted against Japan.

In fact, China produced various forms of anti-Japan propaganda. For example, a photograph of a baby crying sitting on the train rail in Shanghai after the city was bombarded appeared in the October 4, 1937 issue of *Life* and the photo attracted tremendous sympathy from all over the world. Mr. Hollington K. Tong wrote in his autobiography:

“I could successfully install a shooting team in the Central Press. This team started with only one staff—Wang Xiao-ting, specialized in shooting news topics. Once a few news photos he shot were used in newspapers around the world. Among photos taken during the Battle of Shanghai, the photo of an orphan sitting and crying on the train rail was the best shot, receiving the most admiration from professional cameramen during the Sino-Japanese War.”¹²

¹¹ *Hollington K. Tong autobiography*, p. 79.

¹² *Hollington K. Tong autobiography*, p. 75.

However, this famous photo did not lead to a story evidencing grave massacre of civilians in Shanghai. Eventually, it turns out that the photo in question was a piece of propaganda, with other images showing a man adjusting the baby on the rail for photography. Unlike the case of American missionaries in Nanjing, there were no third-party foreigners to testify that it was a real tragic scene.

There is no doubt that Nanjing Incident propaganda was just one of China's anti-Japan propaganda. However, Chinese activities in the case of Nanjing remained auxiliary, merely helping disseminate the Nanjing Incident created by the American missionaries. Without records and dissemination of them by the American missionaries in Nanjing, alleged "objective third parties," seen as the core of the Nanjing Incident propaganda, the whole operation would have ended up as temporary "image manipulation," just like a crying baby on the rail in Shanghai.

However, Nanjing Incident propaganda was a big success, firmly grounded on alleged "fact", which was taken as true, even during the Tokyo Trials. This is all because the core of the Nanjing Incident was not created by China but by "objective third-party American missionaries in Nanjing". This is the reason why the mystery of the Nanjing Incident remains unresolved, however hard we try to investigate the truth about China's anti-Japan activities.