

3. THE REAL INSTIGATORS

Communist elements intent on escalation

The Japanese conspiracy myth has been shattered. Now we must focus on the truth. Was the incident fortuitous, or was there a mastermind behind it?

The Lugou Bridge Incident had more than its share of mysterious aspects. For instance, the first few shots fired against the Japanese were followed by more than a dozen others. During that time, several Japanese officers and soldiers noticed what they interpreted as an exchange of flashlight signals between the walls of Wanping Fortress and the Yongding riverbank. Such activity suggests that Chinese troops on the embankment were coordinating their actions with someone inside the fortress, or firing in accordance with his orders. Who was that person?

The men wielding the guns on the embankment and firing them illegally were regular Chinese troops. Therefore, Qin Dechun's statement to the effect that there were no Chinese soldiers outside Wanping was a lie. At the IMTFE, Sakurai Tokutarō (advisor to the 29th Army when the incident occurred) testified that Jin Zhenzhong told him that none of his subordinates were at the Dragon King Temple, and that it must have been bandits who fired those shots. But Jin retracted his statement at around 5:40 a.m. on July 8, when intense gunfire erupted in the vicinity of the Dragon King Temple. He then admitted that he had his men at the temple. He had lied to Lt. Col. Sakurai. Furthermore, in his recollections Jin reports that upon arriving at Lugou Bridge, he immediately placed his troops in combat positions, placing the 11th Company, the strongest of his four, near the Dragon King Temple.¹ Incidentally, Jin Zhenzhong later embraced the CCP.

The lies told by Qin Dechun and Jin Zhenzhong, who stubbornly insisted that there was not a single soldier outside Wanping Fortress, smack of a conspiracy.

In the wake of the incident, there were frequent instances of shots fired, seemingly to provoke both the Japanese and Chinese. On the night of July 22, the Japanese military police and the Special Service Agency revealed information about anti-Japanese activities. Apparently, students from Tsinghua [Qinghua] University in Beijing, led by Liu Shaoqi, head of the CCP's Northern Bureau, were using crude homemade weapons and firecrackers to irritate both the Japanese and Chinese, and thus cause the incident to escalate. Coincidentally, after the Greater East Asian War ended, Kasai Jun'ichi, a Japanese officer who became an officer in the Chinese Red Army, wrote in *New Information about the Lugou Bridge Incident* that he had occasion to read the following in an account in "Political Training for Rank-and-File Soldiers."

The incident was accomplished by a unit led by Liu Shaoqi. It acted decisively, following instructions issued by the CCP's Central Committee.²

¹ Sakurai Tokutarō, affidavit submitted to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), Court Exhibit No. 2480, p. 4.

² Kasai Jun'ichi, trans. and ed., *Shin shiryō: Rokōkyō jiken* (New information about the Lugou Bridge Incident) ([Tokyo]: Seishō Shuppansha, 1975).

Here we have an admission from the CCP claiming responsibility for the planning and execution of the incident.

Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable to conclude that the CCP was the common thread connecting all the points raised above. This viewpoint forms the basis for the preferred explanation in Japanese academia, i.e., that the incident was perpetrated by the CCP, with Liu Shaoqi acting as chief instigator. (The ostensible investigation into the accidental assault theory is likely a sycophantic attempt to appease the PRC.)

Chinese sources expose conspiracy

The *Lugou Bridge Incident: The Crisis Unfolds* appeared in Beijing in May of 1987, the 50th anniversary of the incident. It includes a detailed description of the 29th Army's war plan against Japan [as it stood] immediately before the incident. The following is a summary of that account.

In May of 1937 Wanping Fortress was battalion headquarters and home to one company. However, toward the end of May, three additional companies were stationed outside the fortress, and in June, two more battalions were dispatched to Changxindian, southwest of the Lugou Bridge. At about the same time, 10 pillboxes on the left bank of the Yongding River were excavated and renovated. Besides bolstering military training, the 29th Army promoted a political education program for its troops, whose focus was resisting Japan and saving China. In April and May of the same year, the 29th Army drafted a definitive operation plan to use against Japan. Its author, Zhang Yueting, the 29th Army's chief of staff, produced a passive plan based on the Nationalist's government's position of withdrawing from Beiping, if necessary to preserve strength and await nationwide engagement. However, Zhang Kexia, the deputy chief of staff opposed the plan. He formulated and promoted an aggressive plan in its stead to annihilate the Japanese army, based on the principle of using offense as defense.

What do we know about Zhang Kexia? He was an undercover CCP member whose direct orders emanated from that party's Central Committee. An article about Liu Shaoqi's United Front activities within the 29th Army. It contains a nearly complete picture of the CCP's extensive covert operations, including the recollections of Zhang Kexia. The following is a summary of its contents.

Zhang Kexia, whose real name was Zhang Shutang, joined Feng Yuxiang's Northwest Army in 1923. He became a special member of the CCP in 1929, maintaining direct contact with the Central Committee, and retaining his clandestine status in the Northwest Army for a long period of time, while he waited for the right opportunity. In 1934 Zhang was appointed chief of staff of Zhang Zizhong's 38th Division, and deputy chief of staff of the 29th Army. Thereafter Xiao Ming (who was chairman of the Beijing Federation of Trade Unions after the Greater East Asian War ended, and died a natural death in 1959) served as the intermediary between the CCP's Central Committee and Zhang Kexia. Between 1936 and 1938 Liu Shaoqi was secretary of the CCP Northern Bureau, representing the party's Central Committee. During that time, he promoted the anti-Japanese United Front in North China, and developed and implemented anti-Japanese guerrilla warfare.

Zhang Kexia's aggressive anti-Japanese strategy involved dividing the 100,000 men of the 29th Army into several field groups to be deployed in three battle zones: Beijing, Tianjin, and Chahar. After annihilating the Japanese forces and when the time was right, they were to attack Shanhai Pass and recapture the territory outside the pass, namely, Manchuria. Zhang presented his plan to the CCP through Xiao Ming. Before long, Xiao handed Zhang a memorandum stating that the party had approved his plan. Zhang acknowledged that it was Secretary Liu Shaoqi who had reviewed and recommended his plan. This is how we know that Zhang Kexia prevailed upon Gen. Song Zheyuan's 29th Army to take action at Lugou Bridge, thus setting the stage for eight years of resistance against the Japanese.³

This is a classic example of inadvertently revealing a secret. Specifically, it was Zhang Kexia, an undercover CCP member and 29th Army deputy chief of staff, who masterminded the full-scale attack against the China Garrison Army. And it was Liu Shaoqi, head of the CCP's Northern Bureau and emissary of its Central Committee, who approved it and ordered its implementation.

When the Japanese Infantry Brigade that had pacified the Beiping-Tianjin area on July 29, entered Beiping on August 8, brigade headquarters staff discovered documents created by the Hebei-Chahar Pacification Office's General Staff. They included plans for a special exercise to be conducted by the 29th Army, whose purpose was to defeat Japanese forces dispersed around Beiping, and were accompanied by an operational map indicating an implementation date of May 23 (see reproduction on next page). This map may well have been based on Zhang Kexia's plan.

What was the connection between the anti-Japanese offensive plan and the Lugou Bridge Incident? My conjecture is that overzealous Communist elements in the 29th Army or anti-Japanese activists were responsible for the initial unlawful shots. However, the subsequent, persistent shooting may have been the implementation of Zhang Kexia's aggressive anti-Japanese operational plan, done with the approval of the CCP's Central Committee. In other words, the accidental unlawful shooting may have triggered the CCP's premeditated belligerent acts against Japan. I believe that the truth lies ultimately somewhere in this area.

IMTFE fails to punish perpetrators

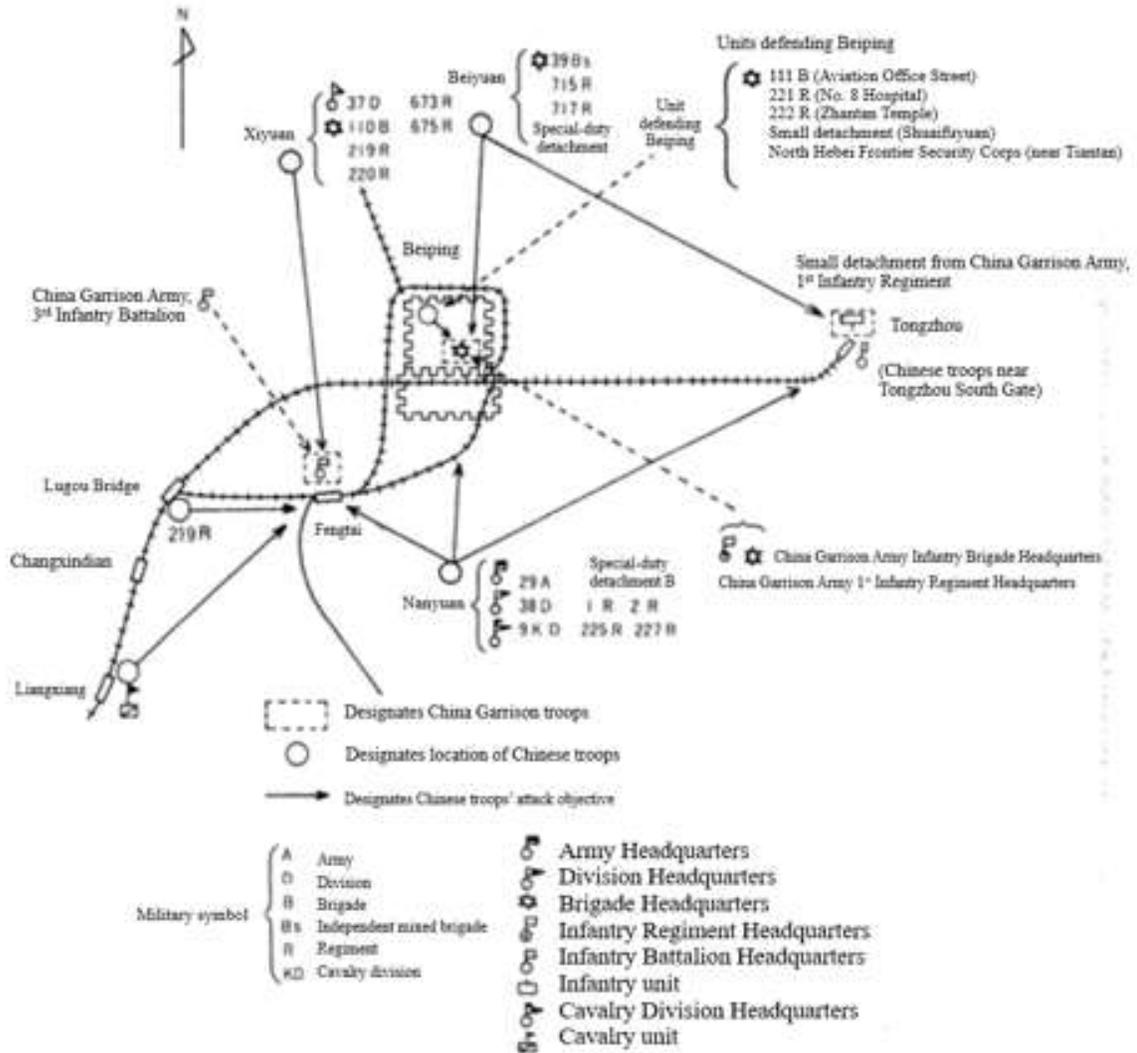
The judgment handed down at the IMTFE in connection with the Lugou Bridge Incident is rife with errors and fabrications, including misrepresentations of the number of Japanese soldiers stationed in China. But most bizarre is the lack of any mention of the initial unlawful shooting. Instead, we find only the following: "It was therefore under an atmosphere of tension and unrest that on that night the Lukouchiao Incident broke out."⁴ Compare this with the tribunal's

³ Wu Yueying *et al.*, "Analysis of Historical Facts Pertaining to Comrade Liu Shaoqi's United Front Activities Within the 29th Army" in *Historical Materials Pertaining to the Anti-Japanese War in the Beijing Area* (Beijing: Beijing Publishing Office of Xinhua Bookstore, September 1986).

⁴ IMTFE, *Judgment*, Recital of Facts, Lugou Bridge Incident, 49,208; <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/8bef6f/pdf>.

**OPERATIONAL MAP FOR SPECIAL EXERCISE: 29TH ARMY PLAN TO DEFEAT
JAPANESE TROOPS STATIONED NEAR BEIPEING**

May 23, 1937



exhaustive pursuit of responsibility for the South Manchuria Railway bombing at Liutiaogou, which gave rise to the Manchurian Incident and which was attributed to a Japanese military conspiracy. However, no reference was made to the identity of those who fired the first shots at Lugou Bridge. Instead, the IMTFE distorted the logic to place the blame on the Japanese for creating a tense situation.

It is likely that this was done because of apprehension that a more in-depth investigation into the source of the initial shots would reveal evidence damaging to the Chinese. Incidentally, Mei Ru'ao, the judge representing the Republic of China at the IMTFE, defected to the CCP after the tribunal ended. Given the possibility of a grandiose CCP conspiracy having initiated the Lugou Bridge Incident, we can see why the IMTFE, one of whose judges was a communist sympathizer, was reluctant to conduct a thorough investigation. Instead, the question of who perpetrated the incident, and where responsibility lay, was allowed to remain unresolved. The blame for the incident was laid upon Japan for creating the circumstances surrounding it.

That notwithstanding, in contrast to its relentless pursuit of the South Manchuria Railway bombing (the Manchurian Incident), the court chose the opposite approach when it came to the 2nd Sino-Japanese War by adopting a judicial stance that turned a blind eye to the background of the incident, and failing to launch a thorough investigation of the unlawful shots, the direct cause of the conflict. The intent of such a stance was, unquestionably, to find Japan guilty. This tribunal's double standard clearly demonstrates that the IMTFE was, ultimately, a political trial, and nothing more than a drama of political revenge.