

## Part 1 - The Manchurian Incident

### **Chronology**

1911 October 10 - Xinhai Revolution

1922 February 6 - Nine-Powers Treaty (Washington Naval Conference)

1931 September 18 - Manchurian Incident

1932 March 1 - Manchukuo is founded

September 4 - Lytton Report is released

1933 March 27 - Japan withdraws from the League of Nations  
(effective 1935 March 27)

May 31 - Tanggu Truce

1935 June 10 - He-Umezu Agreement

1936 December 12 - Xian Incident

1937 July 7 - Marco Polo Bridge Incident

July 11 - Local ceasefire agreement

July 29 - Tongzhou Massacre

August 9 - Murder of Sublieutenant Oyama

August 13 - Battle of Shanghai

August 15 - Chiang Kai-shek issues general mobilization order

August 21 - Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact

October 2 - Landing of Japan's 10th Army at Hangzhou Bay  
leads to the collapse of the Chinese Army in Shanghai

November 5 - Japan makes peace offer through German  
Ambassador to China Oskar Trautmann

December 1 - Order to capture Nanking is issued

December 13 - Fall of Nanking, the Japanese Army enters  
Nanking

December 22 - Japan reissues its peace terms through  
Trautmann

1938 January 16 - First Konoe Statement cuts ties with Chiang Kai-  
shek's regime

November 3 - Second Konoe Statement declares a new order in  
Asia

December 22 - Third Konoe Statement enunciates the principles  
of friendly relations with neighbors, anti-communism, and  
economic cooperation

1940 March 30 - Establishment of the Republic of China in Nanking

1943 November 5-6 - Greater East Asia Conference is convened in  
Tokyo

### **How did 10,400 Japanese soldiers occupy Manchuria?**

On September 18, 1931, a line of the South Manchuria Railway at Liutiaogou, about eight kilometers north of the city of Mukden, was blown apart. Japan's Kwantung Army assumed this to be the work of Manchurian warlord Zhang Xueliang,<sup>1</sup> and so it launched an immediate attack on Zhang's headquarters of Beidaying. By the following morning, the Kwantung Army had routed Zhang's army and occupied Beidaying.

This incident is said to have been secretly engineered by a group of Kwantung Army staff officers led by Ishiwara Kanji, but circumstances in Manchuria left them with little other choice. Zhang Xueliang was actively persecuting the Japanese residents of Manchuria, including even disavowing their leases which had been recognized by treaty. His promotion of anti-Japanese education touched off a series of attacks on Japanese people, with twelve such incidents occurring between July and September alone. The most significant were the back-to-back Wanpaoshan and Nakamura Incidents.

(1.) Over two hundred Korean farmers who had moved to the village of Wanpaoshan in Manchuria were building an irrigation ditch when, suddenly, the Public Safety Office ordered a halt to construction. Chinese soldiers were dispatched to demand the immediate withdrawal of the farmers and arrest of their ringleaders. The Japanese consulate sought to protect the Korean farmers, who had been Japanese subjects since the annexation of Korea in 1910, by sending in armed police, who stood off against thousands of Chinese rioters.<sup>2</sup>

(2.) While travelling to Mongolia, Captain Nakamura, an active duty army officer, and three attendants were massacred by Chinese regulars. The Chinese attempted to cover up the incident, but when the truth became known, it sparked an angry outcry in Japan. This provocation alone was serious enough to have started a war. Ishiwara Kanji's decisive action was a response to the government's failure to take any effective countermeasures against these repeated illegal acts.

In 1931, Zhang's Northeast Army was a massive force of 250,000 soldiers<sup>3</sup> equipped with modern weaponry. And yet, it was crushed in no time by a mere 10,400<sup>4</sup> Kwantung Army soldiers. The Kwantung Army quickly occupied key cities in southern Manchuria,

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<sup>1</sup> Zhang Xueliang was the son of Zhang Zuolin, warlord ruler of Manchuria. In December 1928, Zhang Xueliang swore allegiance to the government of Chiang Kai-shek.

<sup>2</sup> Infuriated Koreans attacked the Chinese quarters of cities in Korea such as Seoul, Pyongyang, and Sinūiju, leaving 109 people dead.

<sup>3</sup> There were 250,000 regular soldiers and 80,000 irregulars. See Kojo Tanehide's essay "Manchu Jihen no Genin to Keika" [The Origins and Unfolding of the Manchurian Incident] in *"Manshu Jihen no Keika"* [*The History of the Manchurian Incident*], p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> The total of 10,400 included a resident division, composed of about 5,400 soldiers, plus the Independent Garrison, composed of about 5,000 soldiers. By treaty, Japan could station fifteen soldiers for every kilometer of the South Manchuria Railway's 1,100 kilometers of track. Therefore, the actual number of Japanese soldiers in Manchuria was considerably fewer than the 16,500 permitted by treaty.

including Changchun and Jilin, and, in November, took Qiqihar in northern Manchuria. Within only two months, all strategic sites across the vast territory of Manchuria had been captured with a military force of just over 10,000 men, plus a few reinforcements from the Japanese Korean Army.

Although one might be tempted to ascribe this to the elite training of the Kwantung Army, we should recognize that, in the end, victory was possible only thanks to the support of the people of Manchuria. A look at Manchuria's financial situation fully reveals just how extreme the rule of Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang had been. In the year 1929, annual revenue amounted to 121 million yuan, but annual expenditure reached 148 million yuan, a deficit of 27 million yuan. One-hundred and two million yuan, or eighty percent of annual revenue, was spent on maintaining the military. By doing this, the government could maintain its oversized military, but the costs were borne on the backs of the Manchurian people. Really, there was probably no one on earth who would be willing to sustain such an army.

### **The appearance of local committees and Manchuria's declarations of independence**

September 24, less than a week from the outbreak of the Incident, saw the establishment of the Mukden Local Self-Government Preservation Committee, which was later reorganized as the Liaoning Province Local Preservation Committee. This was soon followed on September 27 with the establishment of the Harbin Special Administrative District Peace Preservation Committee. On September 28, Liaoning Province, Jilin Province, and Taonan District all issued declarations of independence.

In this manner, the campaign to found a new country surged in all parts of Manchuria. In February 1932, the All-Manchuria Joint Convention to Found a New Nation was convened, which led to the formation of the Northeastern Administrative Committee. Seven men were elected to serve on the committee, including its chairman, Zhang Jinghui.<sup>5</sup> Finally, on March 1, Manchukuo declared itself an independent nation. Puyi, who had escaped from Tianjin to Lushun in November, was appointed Chief Executive and later, Emperor.<sup>6</sup>

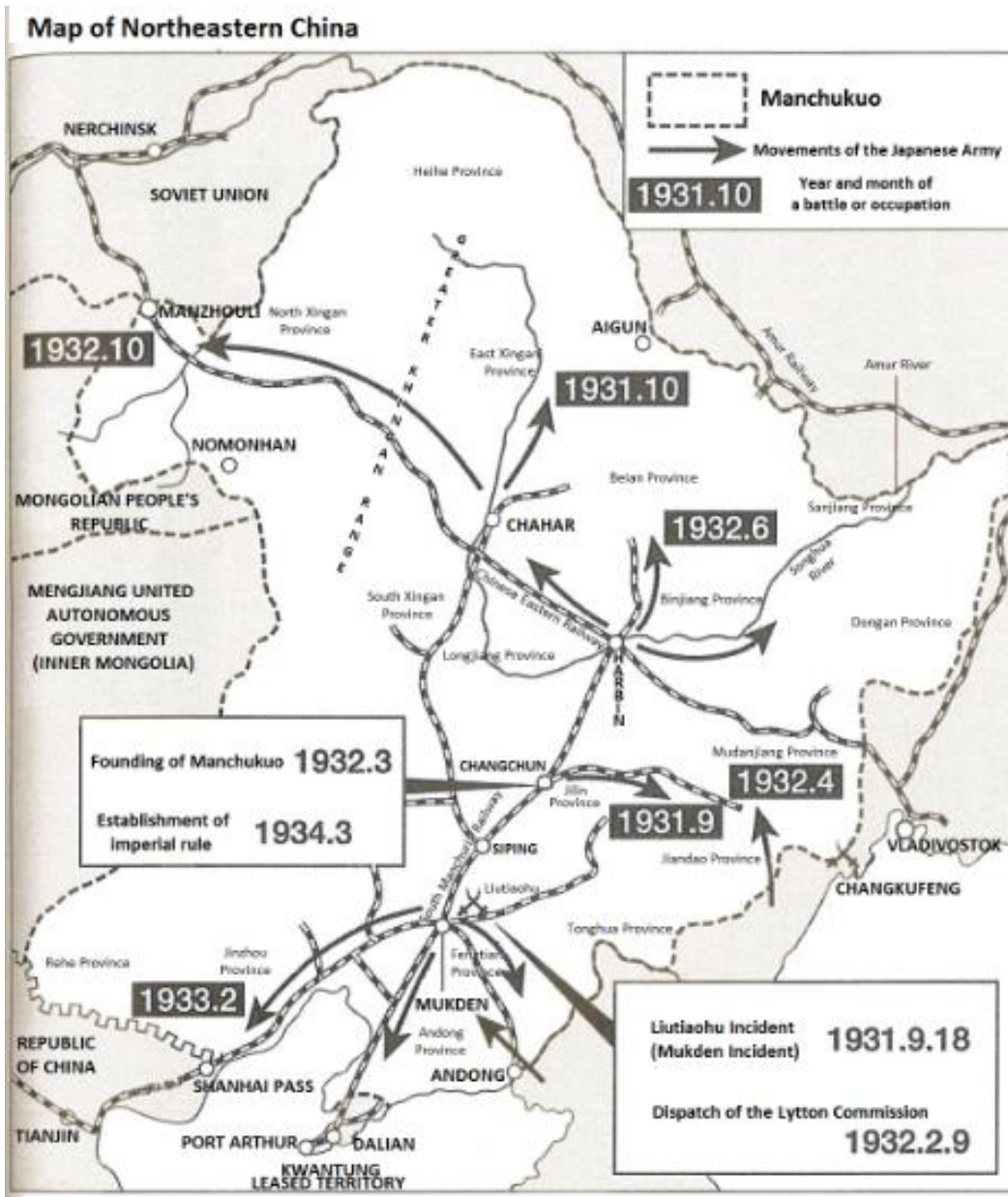
The Kwantung Army coordinated the Manchurian independence movement by establishing new administrative bodies and persuading key leaders to join them with army backing, but this was not in any way a military government. To create a military government in such a vast land with just 10,000 soldiers would have been an impossible task because the remnants of Zhang Xueliang's 250,000-strong regular army and 80,000 irregulars were still present in Manchuria.

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<sup>5</sup> The six other members of the committee were Zang Shiyi, Xi Qia, Ma Zhanshan, Tang Yulin, Ling Sheng, and Qi Wang.

<sup>6</sup> Puyi (February 7, 1906 - October 17, 1967), of the twelfth generation of the Qing Dynasty, reigned as the last emperor of China between December 2, 1908 and February 12, 1912.

Well before the Manchurian Incident, Manchuria was already a latent hotbed of pro-independence sentiment, epitomized by the slogans *baojing anmin*<sup>7</sup> and *liansheng zizhi*.<sup>8</sup> As soon as the burden of the warlord government was removed, the independence movement flourished. The Kwantung Army was seeking to protect Japan's interests, but these interests coincided with the aspirations of the Manchurian people.



<sup>7</sup> A regionalist concept literally meaning "defend the borders of Manchuria and keep the people safe".

<sup>8</sup> A federalist concept literally meaning "united but autonomous provinces".

## **The Lytton Report**

The famous Lytton Report<sup>9</sup> on the Manchurian Incident documented all these developments in a very accurate manner.

Nevertheless, when addressing the question of whether or not the establishment of Manchukuo reflected the will of the people, the report concluded that popular opinion was opposed to Manchukuo on the basis of 1,550 letters which the Lytton Commission had received from ordinary residents. In fact, these letters were the product of a campaign by anti-Manchukuo elements who had not been able to directly present their views to the commission. That is the reason why the contents of every one of the letters, save two, were hostile to Manchukuo. The speech of Manchukuo Prime Minister Zhang Jinghui, which I will quote at length, leaves little doubt that the large majority of Manchurians were not opposed to Manchukuo. Indeed, the only thing that the letters demonstrate is how badly the Lytton Commission was fooled by the Nationalist and Communist Parties' skillful, mass-organized propaganda campaign.

Even so, the Lytton Report did acknowledge that, "This is not a case in which one country has declared war on another country without previously exhausting the opportunities for conciliation provided in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Neither is it a simple case of the violation of the frontier of one country by the armed forces of a neighbouring country, because in Manchuria there are many features without an exact parallel in other parts of the world."<sup>10</sup> The report never accused Japan of aggression.

## **Zhang Jinghui's speech to the Greater East Asia Conference**

The following speech by the second prime minister of Manchukuo, Zhang Jinghui, should make it clear to anyone that the letter-writing campaign aimed at the Lytton Commission was completely fraudulent. Zhang was serving as Mayor of Harbin in 1931, and on September 27, soon after the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident, he formed the Harbin Special Administrative District Peace Preservation Committee. Harbin declared its independence on January 1, 1932. Zhang delivered this speech<sup>11</sup> on November 5, 1943 while serving as Manchukuo's official representative to the Greater East Asia Conference in Tokyo:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This report on the Manchurian Incident was produced by a League of Nations commission. Its official title was the "Report of the Commission of Enquiry of the League of Nations into the Sino-Japanese Dispute". The chairman of the committee was Earl of Lytton from Great Britain, and its other members included Count Aldrovandi of Italy, Lieutenant General Henri Claudel of France, Major General Frank McCoy of the United States, and Dr. Heinrich Schnee of Germany.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted from p. 124 of the Lytton Report.

<sup>11</sup> The full English text of this speech is available on the website of the Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact. (<http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL/Chang-Ching-hui-address.pdf>)

<sup>12</sup> Delegates from Japan, Manchukuo, the Republic of China in Nanking, the Philippines, Thailand, Burma, and the Provisional Government of Free India attended the conference.

"Now I am looking back over the foundation of the country of Manchuria, ten years ago, as the first country ever founded which is confident of being Asian in the true sense of the word. Deeply excited, I feel proud of our new country. Luckily, I too took part in the foundation with irresistible passion. I am reminded that what was missing in Manchuria at that time was a political system based on moral justice. That is why the public has not been organized toward any idealistic goal. The land was devastated and the people were randomly and lawlessly exploited. The military clique played feudal politics and imposed heavy, unjust taxes. In fact, such a situation was nothing but a symbol of ill-treated Asia, which was without any freedom or creativity. It was the militaristic clique of Zhang Xueliang that practically assumed control of the district of Manchuria, cruelly squeezing the people. The dictator was inspired by Americans and Britons with their policy to disturb Asia, which led him to be hostile to Japan. Japan decisively launched a counterattack until, at last, the Zhang government broke down. As a result, it was no wonder that thirty million people got together to give support to the new country of morality and autonomy. They knew the new government had a doubtless and firm intention of making much of the welfare of the people and the development of the land."

Zhang Jinghui's proud declaration about Manchukuo's thirty million people joining in unison certainly rings true when one considers the spectacular growth the new nation was experiencing at that time. Zhang continues:

"As to the achievements of the newly established country of Manchuria during the first ten years, the entire world is paying special attention. I am taking advantage of this occasion to explain several basic problems regarding our achievement. The first is the friendly relation among the races. In our country of Manchuria, there are many races, including Japanese, Manchurian, Mongolian and others, living in peace and stability. Traditionally, when more than one race lived together, it was usual that one race controlled and exploited others. In Manchuria, however, each of the races is able to display its own ability and play an important part in carrying out the idealistic goals of the country... The third is the stabilization of the life of the people and the training of a strong and righteous people. No sooner had the country been founded that the government standardized the monetary system, which had been complicated and thought to be difficult to deal with. As a result, prices have been stabilized and the people are able to enjoy their lives. At the same time, we made every effort to maintain public peace and order. At the time of the foundation of the country, the land was infested with three thousand bandits. Now there are few, if any, such people seen anywhere in the territory... Lastly, what is most important is the development of industry... Now I give some figures. The scale of national finances was, at the time of the foundation of the country, two hundred seventy million or so yen. It has rapidly expanded by sixteen times in ten years. It now exceeded four billion and four hundred and fifty million. Railway mileage has been lengthened from six thousand kilometers to twelve thousand. The number of elementary school students increased from half million to two and a half million. Let me talk about production increases. The output of

coal has grown by four times and that of pig iron by five times. It is no exaggeration to say that we have pulled off a coup." <sup>13</sup>

### **Achieving the world's highest rate of economic growth**

An expansion of public finances by sixteen times in ten years is a truly remarkable feat. One might assume that GNP was rising at almost the same rate, but actually the annual rate of GNP growth was an even more astonishing thirty percent. This was not just the fastest economic expansion in the world at that time, it was also the fastest economic expansion the world had ever seen. Ko Bunyu believes that, if Manchukuo had survived the war, it would have become an even more industrialized and economically developed nation than Japan.

Manchukuo's economic development received high praise in a book written by Dr. Elizabeth Schumpeter, the wife of the famous economist Joseph Schumpeter.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the five-fold rise in elementary school enrollment demonstrates that education was becoming universally accessible to all of Manchuria's "five races".<sup>15</sup>

Yanaihara Tadao, former Chancellor of the University of Tokyo and a specialist in colonial policy, emphasized that all the levers of political, economic, and military power in Manchukuo were held by Japanese citizens, and on that basis condemned Manchukuo as a "Japanese puppet state".

However, it was surely quite normal for a new developing nation like Manchukuo to seek the aid of Japanese citizens with experience working in a modern country. The more important question is whether or not the Japanese were attempting to entrench themselves as a privileged, ruling elite. In fact, as is shown in Zhang's speech, the Japanese placed great importance on racial harmony and adopted no discriminatory policies. Manchukuo's dramatic expansion in school enrollment is proof of this. As the Manchukuo people's level of education rose due to this policy, it would have been natural for them to take over the positions once held by Japanese citizens.

As Zhang Jinghui emphasized in his speech, "I can pride myself on the prosperity of my country. We owe this happiness to the chivalrous spirit with which Imperial Japan constantly give us their support."<sup>16</sup> He was expressing gratitude to Japan, but that does not mean that he was a puppet of Japan. His speech was delivered at the Greater East Asia Conference, which today many Japanese academics assume to have been a gathering of

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<sup>13</sup> Address of His Excellency Chang Ching-hui, Prime Minister of the Empire of Manchuria (<http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL/Chang-Ching-hui-address.pdf>), p.3-5

<sup>14</sup> See *The Industrialization of Japan and Manchukuo* by Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter.

<sup>15</sup> The five races were the Manchus, Mongolians, Han Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese. The fundamental policy of the government of Manchukuo was "five races under one union".

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, (<http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL/Chang-Ching-hui-address.pdf>), p. 5.

"Japanese puppet states". However, journalist Henry Stokes,<sup>17</sup> former Tokyo bureau chief for *The New York Times*, responded, "The Japanese who believe that are themselves like puppets who have sold Japan's soul to foreign powers." Stokes seems to understand the situation quite well.

In short, the assertion that Japan conquered Manchuria does not stand up to scrutiny.

### **The myth of the Fifteen-Year War**

The official view of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) designates the war between Japan and China as a "Fifteen-Year Sino-Japanese War," beginning with the Manchurian Incident (1931) and continuing through the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (July 1937), the Battle of Shanghai (August-November 1937), the China Incident (1937-1941), and the Greater Asian War (1941-1945). This belief is also popular among Japanese historians, and it even appears in Japanese history textbooks.

However, this view was concocted by the CCP, and it has no basis in historical fact. The Manchurian Incident began on September 18, 1931, and following the fall of Qiqihar on November 19, the occupation of Manchuria's three northeastern provinces was largely complete. The fighting stopped with the fall of Jinzhou, in Jehol Province, on January 3 of the following year, and then, in March, the state of Manchukuo came into being. That was the end of the war.

Having said that, from the perspective of the CCP, it was on April 26, 1932 that the Chinese Soviet Republic, founded in Ruijin in Jiangxi Province, issued a "declaration of war" on Japan in the name of the central government. If that declaration had been recognized internationally as a serious act of war, then Japan would have had the right to respond by invading communist-held regions of China. In fact, it was not deemed to be anything more than a symbolic move and was completely ignored by other countries. The Chinese Soviet Republic was itself destroyed in October of 1934 during Chiang Kai-shek's encirclement campaigns, but from the perspective of the communist cause, China continued to be officially at war with Japan since the declaration was issued. And yet, in that case the conflict should have been called the Fourteen-Year War, not the Fifteen-Year War.

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<sup>17</sup> Henry Stokes was born in Great Britain and is a graduate of Oxford University. He worked, in succession, as Tokyo bureau chief for *The New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, and the *London Times*. He is the author of the book *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*, as well as works published in Japanese including "Eikokujin Kisha ga Mita Rengokoku Sensho Shikan no Kyomo" [*The Lie of the Allied Powers' Victors' View of History as Seen by a British Reporter*], "Gaikoku Tokuhain Kyokai Juchin ga Hannichi Chukan no Sagi o Abaita" [*A Veteran of the Foreign Correspondents' Club Exposes the Anti-Japanese Deception of China and Korea*], "Naze Amerika wa Tainichi Senso o Shikaketa No Ka" [*Why Did America Start a War with Japan?*] (co-authored with Kase Hideaki), and "Rengokoku Sensho Shikan no Tettei Hihan" [*Complete Rebuttal of the Allied Powers' Victors' View of History*] (co-authored with Fujii Genki).



The CCP's "anti-Japanese resistance" did involve guerrilla raids, but the fact that the declaration of war was actually merely a slogan is clear enough from the following directive issued by Mao Zedong:<sup>18</sup>

"The fighting between China and Japan is an excellent opportunity for expansion of our party. Seventy percent of the policies we have decided upon will be aimed towards self-expansion, twenty percent towards dealing with the Nationalists, and ten percent towards fighting Japan."

In other words, the CCP saw anti-Japanese resistance as a tool to bolster its own power.

The armed confrontation which did occur between Japan and the Nationalist Government of China was effectively ended with the establishment of Manchukuo, and then was officially resolved with the signing of the Tanggu Truce on May 31, 1933.<sup>19</sup> There were no further armed clashes of significance until the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Far from that, in fact, direct rail traffic between Beijing and Mukden resumed immediately after the signing of the truce, and then, in 1934, a postal agreement normalized mail service, telegram delivery, and telephone communication between China and Manchukuo. In 1935, customs came into effect on the border of Manchukuo and China, permitting the resumption of normal international trade. The same year, the Japanese and Chinese legations were upgraded to the status of embassies as the culmination of the improved relations and mutual friendship between the two countries.

All this should leave little doubt that the phrase "Fifteen-Year War," suggesting continuous fighting between Japan and China from the time of the Manchurian Incident and onwards, is ridiculous and in flagrant contradiction to historical fact.

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<sup>18</sup> This famous instruction was handed down by Mao Zedong in September 1937 as the Independent Regiment of the 8th Route Army's 115th Division was going into action against the Japanese Army in Shanxi Province. See "*Dui Rikang Zhan Qijian Zhonggong Tongzhan Celue Zhi Yanjiu*" [*Research on the Chinese Communist United Front during the War of Resistance against Japan*] by Liangmei Mei.

<sup>19</sup> The Tanggu Truce was a ceasefire agreement signed by Major General Okamura Yasuji, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army, and Lieutenant General Xiong Bin, the Chief of Staff of the Republic of China Beiping Branch Military Council. According to the main terms of the agreement, the Chinese Army was to withdraw west and south of a line stretching through Yanqing, Tongzhou, and Lutai, and not undertake any provocative actions. In exchange, the Japanese Army was to withdraw north of the Great Wall.