

Testimonial record of survivors (4)

(3) Yoshimori Tachibana testimony

Yoshimori Tachibana was a reporter to Tianjin Branch of Tokyo Nichi Nichi Newspaper and reported on the incident at the time. The detailed care to the overall coverage is evident; The fact that Tongzhou Security Force were colluding with the Kuomintang 29th Army, and on July 28th, the day prior to the incident, and Song Zheyuan (宋哲元) of the 29th Army secretly orders the Public Security Department and Militia issues to mount a comprehensive attack on the Japanese starting 2am on the 29th, were precisely reported. “Bungei Shunju” extra publication “Story” July 1938 issue, pp. 52-58.

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On-site report by a newspaper reporter

Background and aftermath of the Tōngzhōu(Tungchow) (通州) Mutiny

By Yoshimori Tachibana (橘善守), then stationed at Tiānjīn (天津) Branch,
Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun Press (東京日日新聞)

Mutiny of the Peace Preservation Corps

On July 28, 1937, the Imperial Air Force of Japan finally put an end to nearly three weeks of forbearance and commenced retaliatory fire against the Chinese 29th Army. The Hebei prairie was soon covered by the clouds of war as the Japanese army and air force launched well-coordinated attacks with roaring fighters and bombers throughout the day.

First at dawn, Japanese forces began bombing the encampments of China's 29th Army all across Beiping, including the headquarters of the 38th Division at Nanyuan (南苑) and the stronghold of the 37th Division at Xiyuan (西苑). Then, in the field, the Japanese army laid a bold siege to these sites. Reports of our military victories came in succession to us as we breathlessly awaited the good news at the reporters' department (then publicity department) of the Japanese China Garrison Army stationed in Tianjin.

China's Nanyuan was conquered early at eleven a.m., followed by the fall of Xiyuan. In

the fierce battle for Nanyuan, Generals Dong Linge (冬麟閣) and Zhao Dengyu (趙登兎) were killed in action. According to the enemy's announcement, casualties reached five thousand men. Thus, the Jingjin (北京 and 天津) area was conquered by the Imperial Forces in a single day, and the enemy's enormous army that dominated the Yondong-he (永定河) basin area was destroyed.

In the evening of that day, when the scorching heat of 120 degrees Fahrenheit was gone and the yellowish glow of dawn was enveloping Tianjin, the day's victory reports finally ceased coming in. I was then about to light a cigarette, but was shocked at a chain of extraordinary pieces of information. A telephone report from a spinning factory in the Chinese quarters came in saying, "Suspicious movements have been observed in the Peace Preservation Corps. There are signs that they might attack the factory, so please report the matter to the command center!"

Reporter H of China Press told me, "The Peace Preservation Corps is forming a battle line near the Tianjin Main Station. It's dangerous, so you ought to move to the Japanese settlement," and then he hurriedly left. The factory is located near the Tianjin Main Station.

I suddenly recalled what a boy in the street said to me when I was coming back from the command center, "They say Chinese soldiers will attack the Japanese settlement. When I went fishing on the other side of the Haiguang (海光) temple (where the command center was located), I saw Chinese soldiers."

I checked with the Consulate General, but they could only say, "Public Security Bureau Chief Li Wentian (李文田) (Vice Commander of the 38th Division) has already asked us to protect their lives and properties, and we have even told the Peace Preservation Corps that it could disarm. Therefore, the Corps will certainly not rebel".

Nevertheless, my sixth sense was not at all persuaded by what they said. Anyway, it was already past midnight. To get to the Main Station, I had to pass through the Chinese quarter. As I could not rid myself of a certain ominous feeling (That if I were bold enough to try that, I would get killed), I instead drove to the East Station.

I told the commanding officer of that station, who looked like a laidback reserve officer, about what was happening. Then, while I was on my return drive, I dropped by the office of Dagong (大公報) press in the French settlement and met my friend Y who had studied at a Japanese college.

How busy and hectic was the midnight atmosphere at the editing office of the largest

press in China! Mr. Y ushered me into the drawing room, rather than the editing room as he usually did. I told myself, “This must be a serious matter”. Although he used to be frank with me and told me everything straight, this night he looked uneasy and was careful in his wording as if he was concealing something. Whenever I pressed him for an answer, he uttered nothing but “Shi” (Yes) or “Bushi” (No).

“That is not near the Main Station, but the East Station. Don’t you get any information from Tongzhou or Taigu (太沽) Chinese airplanes are in both Baoding (保定) and Shezhou (滄州) . Li Wentian is quite a guy. He could do things beyond our imagination.” This was what he told and asked me. At that moment, I had a hunch that something big was brewing that would affect all of Tianjin, not just a simple raid. This was becoming a serious case.

It was 1 a.m. when I left Dagong press. Policemen standing in the dark streets shot glares of hostility towards my car which bore the press company flag.

At any rate, I drafted a telegram saying, “The 38th Division that has been ejected from Nanyuan seems to be mobilizing the Peace Preservation Corps in a bid to besiege Tianjin”. Then, at the very moment when I knocked on the door of Major XXX, a mortar projectile exploded with a thunderous roar in the middle of the Japanese settlement where our hotel was located. As I remember, it was around 2 a.m. on the 29th.

Unfortunately, my hunch was correct, and the thunderous rumbles from both sides went on and on. I desperately drove towards the command center along the road abutting the Chinese quarter. I waited for dawn in a room of the reporters department, aware that the enemy's mortar troops were gradually falling back in the face of the Japanese army's daring counterattack.

In fact, the Tianjin East station suffered a fierce attack by the enemy two hours after I had left there last night. XXX airfield was raided. That spinning factory was also attacked, and what was more, these attacks were not limited to Tianjin. The Peace Preservation Corps revolted in various places, including Tongzhou, Taigu, Tanggu (塘沽) , and Junliancheng (軍糧城) on the same day and at the same time. It was in Tongzhou that the most atrocious human suffering occurred, the so-called Tongzhou Mutiny. The fact that this ghastly massacre occurred in the very place believed by everyone to be the safest area in North China tormented us with unending regret.

I started off this account with a description of the incident in Tianjin partly because I happened to be stationed in Tianjin and was closely observing the progress of the

incident. It should thus be noted that the Tongzhou Mutiny did not occur abruptly on its own.

As evidenced by the fact that revolts sprang up in various places on the same day, at the same time, the Tongzhou Mutiny must be recognized as one of the North China Peace Preservation Corps Mutiny operations that we should refer to collectively as the 7.29 Incident. This chain of operations was indeed well-planned and simultaneously executed by the soldiers of the Chinese Peace Preservation Corps that were deployed in various places as detached forces of the 29th Army. The incidents were also partly stimulated by the demagogic broadcasts of the Nanjing Government on the night of the day on which we captured Nanyuan and Xiyuan, the headquarters of the 29th Army. In the very morning of the 28th, a secret order was issued in the name of Song Zheyuan (宋哲元) (Commander of the 29th Army) to execute an all-out attack against Japanese forces by opening fire at 2 a.m. on the 29th.

As was reported at the time, it was obvious to anyone with common sense that the soldiers of the mutinous Peace Preservation Corps committed such ferocious and fiendish acts at the instigation of the Nanjing Government due to their lack of education combined with the savage nature of the Chinese race. However, these facts alone could not possibly be the entire cause of the atrocity. It should not be overlooked that the nationalism fomented by China's anti-Japanese activities had completely captured the minds of those unenlightened men. In other words, blood is thicker than water.

In so far as the above-mentioned is concerned, nationalism is far from being rational in most respects.

Unspeakable Atrocity at Jinshuilou (近水楼)

All of us on site were haunted by the spine-chilling atmosphere. It should be noted that Tongzhou was the capital of the East Hebei Autonomous Government, a government with a special political status far superior to that of the Hebei-Chahar Political Council, and thus was believed by everyone to be, as it were, the safest zone in North China. That fact led us to believe, for example, that casualties should have been less in places outside of Tongzhou. As I recall the progress of the case by referring to what we heard on site, there were a number of signs suggesting what really happened.

On the 28th, Yin Rugeng (殷汝耕), head of the East Hebei Autonomous Government, held a banquet at Jinshuilou, which within a few hours would be transformed into a sea of blood. Zhang Qingyu(張慶余), Commander of the First Unit of the Peace

Preservation Corps, was attending nonchalantly. The guards of the Corps were chatting with maids at the entrance just the same way as usual. Apart from the distant booming heard from Nanyuan and Xiyuan, which were beyond Beijing, time past calmly that night in the capital city of the pro-Japanese regime.

In the meantime, there were demons sharpening their fangs.

About three thousand soldiers of the First and Second Units, under the command of the above-mentioned Zhang Qingyu and Guo Tiefu (郭鉄夫), were incited by false news widely propagated by the anti-Japanese China Press about the victory of the Chinese 29th Army, and so attempted to take over the East Hebei Autonomous Government when the Japanese garrison was undermanned. While surrounding Tongzhou city, they waited for the secret order of the 29th Army to start an all-out attack.

At half past two on the 29th, they rushed into the city, and when the citizens were suddenly awakened by the attack, all the important quarters such as the office of the East Hebei Autonomous Government, our garrison force, the Special Service Agency and the detached consular office were already under siege by the rebellious forces of the Peace Preservation Corps. Telephone lines were severed, and thus all communication channels with those important quarters were rendered completely inoperable.

As the first target of the mutiny was the residence of Yin Rugeng, when Major Hosoki (細木) (Lieutenant-Colonel at that time) of our Special Service Agency became aware of the rebellion at half past two, he was concerned about the safety of Yin and rushed to his residence. Because Yin had already been abducted, his residence was empty.

On his way back, the Major was killed by rebellious troops. Startled by his shout, "I am the agency chief!", the Chinese soldiers who surrounded the Major broke off for a moment, but then he was surrounded again, and was shot through the breast and fell down. The East Hebei Autonomous Government office, Special Service Agency, Kai representative office and garrison force were attacked, and suddenly all hell broke loose across Tongzhou.

Blood-crazed Chinese soldiers slaughtered every Japanese around, and committed unspeakable outrage against every woman. While shouting "Kill the Japanese, don't let any escape!", they invaded every Japanese house to shoot, beat to death or butcher Japanese people.

As widely reported, the brutal butchery at the most reputed Japanese hotel Jinshuilou was beyond description. Among a total of fifteen guests there, fourteen of them

including Consultant Miyawaki (宮脇) of the East Hebei government and General Manager Mishima (三島) of East Hebei Bank were killed. Only Reporter Ando (安藤) of Alliance Communications Inc. managed to escape. Of the hotel staff, only one porter who was on a trip survived, while all ten Japanese including the proprietor were slaughtered.

Nine people were killed in the hotel, while the ones hiding in the attic were enticed out when the Chinese yelled, “We will save your lives!” They were all bound with their hands behind their backs and taken to a shooting area, which was located in the rear of a red light district, a gloomy place even in daytime where red earth of collapsed castle walls was half immersed in a muddy pond surrounded by reed bushes and arrays of blackish willow trees. Those victims were not only from Jinshuilou, but also from various other places. Of the helpless Japanese people, men were immediately shot to death, while women were confined in a women’s education hall nearby, bound from their hands and feet in the shape of a cross, and subjected to unspeakable torture before meeting their end. Only reporter Ando narrowly and miraculously survived being taken from Jinshuilou to that dreadful place.

It was already after dawn when Jinshulou was attacked. That is, it was long after the time when the Special Service Agency and the Kai representative office were assailed. Considering the time gap, one cannot help but wonder why the victims did not manage to take their chance to escape. However, Tongzhou was so peaceful and calm that even people from Beijing came to the city, trusting that it was the only place safe from any danger, and thus they had not the slightest idea that such a massacre could have taken place there. It was indeed this sense of safety that caused the disaster.

The Tongzhou Special Service Agency and Yin Rugeng

It was half past three a.m. when the Tongzhou Special Service Agency was raided. We knew this because of the description on the blackboard of the office saying, “We were attacked at half past three on the 29th.” We must never forget that Lieutenant-Colonel Kai (Lieutenant then), an assistant officer at the Special Service Agency, met a heroic death in action here during a desperate fight alongside the other agency officers. After the Agency Commander went out (to his death), the assistant officer Lieutenant Kai took command of the eleven remaining officers to prepare for the rebel soldiers’ attack. In contempt of the desperately small number of officers they faced, the besieging enemy cowardly kept on machine-gunning until the agency officers ran out of ammunition.

“Let us choose an honorable death, rather than survive cowardly!”, Lieutenant-Colonel

Kai shouted to encourage his men while leading the fight. However, there was no way of winning the fight with so few warriors. By the time that they had expended all four thousand of their bullets, nine out of eleven officers had been shot down.

According to a survivor, Lieutenant-Colonel Kai was determined to die. He tidied up his uniform with a white cotton sash, and, holding his military sword with his right hand and a revolver with his left hand, jumped among the enemy and cut or shot them down one by one. Reportedly, he killed seven to eight enemies with his sword alone. The Lieutenant-Colonel was shot through his thick chest with six bullets and finally fell down, his last word being “Alas!”.

The officers and soldiers of a support unit found Lieutenant-Colonel Kai's body lying flat on the ground with his uniform tightly tidied up with a white cotton sash and his lips tightened into an expression of regret. They were deeply moved, and said, “A warrior should die this way”, while wiping their tear drops off with their uniforms.

Lieutenant-Colonel Kai was from Kumamoto Prefecture. After graduating from the Imperial Military Academy, he learned the Chinese language at a college of foreign studies as a student dispatched from the Army, and then was assigned to the China Garrison Army Headquarters in 1935. He took up the post of aide to the Tongzhou Special Service Agency in April of the same year. With his fluent Chinese and generous heart, he was so confident of his leadership over the Peace Preservation Corps that I still remember him telling me at Tianjin station, “The day in East Hebei would never dawn without me”.

When the remains of Lieutenant-Colonel Kai made a silent, triumphant return home to Tianjin, his eldest son Harusaku (13 years of age then) unhooked the commemorative photograph that was displayed on the drawing room wall by his father when he had been still alive and tore it into pieces shouting, “I'll make them pay for what they did!” This made everyone present burst into tears. As was reported in newspapers at the time, Special Service Agency Chief Hosoki was overjoyed to see his beloved son enter Army Cadet School that spring, but did not live long enough to see him graduate as an officer. From every family of warriors in which the father never returns, you can hear a tale of heroism and tragedy.

Further, our Tongzhou garrison, which was attacked by the enemy at the same time as the Special Service Agency, continuously fought to the last moment with a limited number of soldiers and suffered a total of eleven dead. At the detached consular office, five out of seven were lost. The Military Police lost one. It should be noted that the

brutal atrocities against civilians began after the raids on the main Japanese institutions were already mostly finished.

The rebel Peace Preservation Corps was still not satisfied, and looted Japanese houses two or three times repeatedly in order to steal all their properties, including even footwear and tableware, without leaving anything behind. The East Hebei Bank was robbed of sixty thousand yuan. They took everything but the proverbial kitchen sink.

Within the government of East Hebei, Yin Rugeng was kidnapped first, then Construction Minister Wan Xiaocai (王夏材) and Finance Minister Zhao Congzi (趙從恣) were slaughtered, and all of the Chinese employees ran away. The government offices were robbed of public funds and all their valuables. Government services effectively ceased to function.

The blood-crazed Peace Preservation Corps soldiers entrenched themselves outside of the south gate, and, in order to stir up the whole of East Hebei, they issued a faked telegram to each of the East Hebei provincial heads that read, “The East Hebei puppet government has been overthrown and liquidated. People in the East Hebei area shall obey the orders of the Peace Preservation Corps.” However, our reconnaissance airplanes finally revealed the disaster to the outside world, and our fierce air raids gradually lifted the enemy siege of our garrison. On the 30th, the Kayashima support army arrived, and the rebel Peace Preservation Corps that committed the brutal atrocity was routed by the well-coordinated sweeping operation of Japanese air and army forces. Subsequently, our military launched a bold pursuit of the Chinese soldiers and annihilated most of them.

Thus, the mutiny was promptly stamped out. However, the entire Tongzhou district was filled with the wailings of restless ghosts and devastated by the repetition of torrid heat and rain! The remains of the victims of our nation putrefied, and their angry souls, numbering 170 in total, became the first victims of the Sino-Japanese war.

Numbers of the victims are as follows (according to the survey of the Beijing Japanese Police dated August 7): A total of 230 including 163 deceased and 67 missing persons.

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