

Summary for Orders for Officers and Men of the Expeditionary Force

The Second Sino–Japanese War — How, and with what purpose in mind, did Japan fight? —

Moteki Hiromichi's "China Caused the Second Sino–Japanese War" explains how the Second Sino–Japanese War was a conflict caused by China, and how Japan was dragged into a war she had not sought. http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL02_1/69_S4.pdf

During the war, Japan never made any territorial demands, nor did she make any demands on interests in China. This is made clear from the Funatsu Peace Initiative (Aug. 1937), the Trautmann Peace Initiative (Dec. 1937), etc., wherein no such demands are made.

In Jan. 1938, seeing that no Chinese reply to the Trautmann Peace Initiative was forthcoming though the deadline had come, Japanese prime minister Konoe Fumimaro gave up hopes for peace, declaring, "We will no longer deal with the government of Chiang Kai-shek." Nonetheless, he made many appeals for peace afterward. In November of that year came the second Konoe declaration, wherein he appealed for international justice, joint anti-communism, and economic cooperation between the three countries of Japan, Manchuria, and China. Then in December came Konoe's third declaration. This was a call for "neighborly friendship, anti-Communist cooperation, and economic cooperation." There is nothing in any of these indicating aggressive intentions toward, or designs on ruling, China.

Well, then — with what goals and with what manner of policies and spirit did the Japanese military fight? There is a suitable document to show this. There is a booklet dated 29 April, 1940, titled "Orders for Officers and Men of the Expeditionary Force," issued under the name of Itagaki Seishirō, the China Expeditionary Army's chief of staff.

This document stresses that the object of the hostilities was not the Chinese people themselves, but rather the administration of Chiang Kai-shek, which had linked up with Britain, America, France, and the Soviet Union. To break down the perception that it was otherwise, this document states that the objective in fighting the war was to establish a cooperative relationship grounded on moral principles with Japan, China, and Manchuria. The document clarifies that the fundamental goal was the rebuilding of East Asia and the establishment of a New Order in East Asia. Itagaki called for respect of Chinese traditions, manners, and customs, and said his forces had to aim for a joining of the two peoples with respect, faith, and love. This confirms that there were no thoughts of contempt for China. From this document, we can also infer that Japan was not aimlessly continuing the fight out of sheer momentum for the sake of just prolonging the conflict, even though there is a considerable tendency to criticize Japan for not knowing exactly why she was fighting.

"China Caused the Second Sino–Japanese War" is mainly an analysis of the circumstances of the outbreak of the war, but "Orders for Officers and Men of the Expeditionary Force" is something intended to clarify that the Japanese army did not have as its goal the subjugation of China in the fighting that went on after that. The latter document, as a supplement to the former, negates the criticism of Japan as an aggressor against China. It is good to read them together.