

SUMMARY:

"Analyzing The 'Photographic Evidence' of The Nanking Massacre"

Governments know that “seeing is believing,” thus, have mastered the use of images to shape public opinion to their favor. The message itself would be quickly forgotten or dismissed if there was no dramatic image to accentuate that message. An image from a photograph or film certainly lingers for an extended period in the mind’s eye. It is also through the use of fabricated images or images taken out of context that shifts in public opinion can occur literally overnight.

Recently, a book, [Analysis of the “Photographic Evidence” of the Nanking Massacre], analytically evaluated 143 commonly used photos that have been used to maintain the claim of wide-scale atrocities committed by Japanese troops following the capture of Nanking in December, 1937. There were three conclusions reached by the research group that evaluated these photographs. The first is that none of the 143 photos supported the claim of large scale atrocities. Second, the main sources of most of these photographs were books published by the propaganda arm of the Chinese Nationalist, with the objective of turning world opinion against Japan. Finally the recent Chinese Communist anti-Japan propaganda war began in the 1970’s with the recycling of the Nationalists’ photographs. Thus, images of dead bodies and random Japanese soldiers were primarily used to vilify Japan, not just during the war but well after peaceful relations between China and Japan were restored.



An apparent forfery, composite photograph!
A detailed analysis is given in Chapter 2.

Although the findings substantiate the conclusions of the research team, the ultimate decision to either believe or suspect the veracity of the “Nanking Massacre” is left to the reader. The reader himself must also come to the realization that images of Chinese suffering were used purely for cynical political purposes. The reader may also come to a general realization that without critical evaluation of images presented as “proof” by a government, the true underlying message will be lost. In the case of the “Nanking Massacre” photos, the underlying message of the Chinese Communists is that the Japanese were the enemy in the past and are the current threat to the People’s Republic, thus the state of “vigilance” and hostility needs to continue. Unfortunately, the state of hostility perpetuated by the Chinese Communists through their “Massacre” and similar propaganda is a barrier to true peace. The authors of the book suggest that when the people of both countries finally see through the deception and wholeheartedly reject it, then real peace can be established between the Japanese and Chinese peoples.