

The True Victors

Nationalist China during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945, edited by Paul K. T. Sih, *Hicksville, N. Y.: Exposition Press, 1977, 435 pp. \$20.00.*

FORGERY OF HISTORY is like a counterfeit currency which is deceptively close to the truth, but easily detected. When the Chinese Communists rewrote history by proclaiming that it was they (the CCP) who fought and won the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945, debunkers merely needed to point to the fact that the recent picture of Chiang Ching, Wang Hung-wen, Chang Ch'un-ch'iao and Yao Wen-yuan, taken with Hua Kuo-feng during the September 1976 funeral service of Mao in Peking, was altered after the downfall of the "gang of four" for the sake of political expediency. It was not the first time for the CCP boldly to insult the people's intelligence, and it will not be the last.

Amid the intellectual bandwagonism of studies on the CCP since 1971, little research has been done in solid pursuit of China's wartime history and biased views have prevailed in the very limited publications on the subject. It is refreshing to see that this anthology of war history finally got published. As a sequel tome to the excellent *Strenuous Decade 1927-1937*, the present volume is another outstanding contribution by the eminent scholar Professor Paul Sih. It is a result of the Conference on Wartime China 1937-1945 held from April 30 to May 2, 1976. Twenty-two scholars from the U.S. and the Republic of China took part in the conference and ten papers were presented covering a wide range of major subjects related to the historical background of the war, war strategy, wartime education, food supplies, economic development and war financing, wartime parliament, relationships between regional and central governments, and the foreign relations between the Soviet Union and China. Other important issues which

were not covered, such as war literature and the youth movement, had been dealt with during the 18th Annual Conference of the American Association for Chinese Studies in November 1976.

As a member of the war generation, this reviewer completed his college education during the war period and actually witnessed some of the brutal war itself. It is, thus, somewhat difficult to pretend to remain objective when some critical judgments have to be made on the papers and comments included in this volume.

Historically, the 1927 Tanaka Memorial's proposition of converting China into Japan's "continental empire," the Amai Statement insisting on American hands-off policy on Japan's grand strategy on China in 1933, Hirota's "Three-Point Principle" of 1934 and Japan's aggressive moves in northern China in 1935-1936 had prompted China to take a number of national salvation measures, such as China's New Life Movement in 1934, the National Economic Reconstruction Movement in 1935 and the continuation of nation-building efforts in the strenuous decade of 1927-1937. After the Sian Incident of 1936, Japan, which was alarmed by China's quickened drive of national unity under Chiang's leadership, decided to accelerate her aggression against China. This fact alone should suffice to refute the Chinese Communists' charge that it was China's weakness that encouraged Japan's aggression.

If there was any singular outstanding contribution made by China to the war in the Far East, China's strategy of a war of attrition should be recognized. It was Nationalist China which was willing to make all the sacrifices necessary to putting up a bitter resistance through a "protracted war of attrition" during the first four years. As a result, Japan was mired in the China theater. More significantly, President Chiang Kai-shek adamantly refused to sign a separate truce agreement during the repeated peace offensives launched by the Japanese during the war. If the Nation-

alists had signed a separate peace agreement with Japan, the latter in turn could have freed her manpower and resources to advance her aggressive plans against the West and the other Asiatic nations, it would not be hard to conceive what the outcome of World War II might have been. China's strategy of "trading space for time" eventually proved that the Western Allies' war plan of "Europe first, Asia second" had fatally crippled China's war effort throughout the duration. It is unfair to either downgrade or blame China for her war effort. Professor Wu Hsiang-hsiang articulated this point very well in his essay on "Total Strategy Used by China and Some Major Engagements in the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945."

War education under the leadership of Chen Li-fu, Minister of Education, epitomized China's relentless endeavor to preserve the continuity of her cultural legacy. Under the Nationalist government's wartime education system, massive student financial assistance programs were instituted and maintained. As a result, many students, including this present writer, were able to continue and finish their higher education during the war. Despite the costly war, the Nationalist government had never forgotten to live up to its political accountability and cultural commitment to educate its young people. Out of the 108 colleges and universities in 1939, 52 joined the government's relocation campaign and started their own "10,000-mile long march" to the rear. During the academic years of 1936-1944, students and faculties were increased from 2,166,377 to 3,871,688. Because of its painstaking effort in expanding wartime education, the Nationalist government should be credited for providing the sorely needed opportunities for students and for making it possible for the many leading Chinese nuclear physicists of today to receive their earlier training in China with few disruptions during the war, as well as to advance their further training and careers abroad in later years. Putting their political allegiance and educational

ingratitude aside, Yang Chen-ning and Lee Tsung-dao, two Nobel laureates, owe their education and careers to the national sacrifices made by both the people and the nation during the war. In *The China Cloud*, William L. Ryan and Sam Summerlin cited Cheng Chu-yuan's survey on *Scientific and Engineering Manpower in Communist China, 1949-1963* saying that more than three thousand five hundred Chinese students were at colleges and universities in the U.S. at the end of 1949, when China fell under the control of Communist armies and the Nationalist government moved to Taiwan, 80 physicists, engineers, chemists, geologists and mathematicians were among the many U.S. trained scientists who subsequently returned to the China mainland. In fact, many leading scientists, including Chien San-ch'iang and Chien Hsueh-shen, who worked on Communist China's bomb and missile projects in the 1950's and 1960's were the products of wartime education under the Nationalist government.

In contrast to the intellectual persecution and educational demolition resulting from the CCP's Cultural Revolution, the CCP has failed to produce a single world-renowned scientist since 1949. The Nationalist government, however, remains committed to the nation's long tradition of education and scholarship by making Taiwan the foremost center of Chinese human resources, by sending thousands of students abroad for advanced training in science each year since 1954. In addition, many leading American sinologists, including Theodore de Bary, Martin Wilbur, Joseph Levenson, among others, were recipients of scholarships established by the Chinese government during the war period. In this regard, Professors Ou Tsuin-chen, John Israel and Chun-fan Mao have made solid analyses in the chapter on "Education in Wartime China."

Issues concerning food production and distribution for civilian and military requirements, wartime economic development and public finances as well as China's struggle in developing its overland trans-

portation system, were carefully analyzed in the book with little partiality. What must be pointed out is that the government of the Republic of China was faced with tremendous political difficulties when it had to deal with, in addition to the Japanese invaders, six other *de facto* political entities throughout China during the war, *i.e.*, the CCP's border governments, Wang Ching-wei's puppet government at Nanking, the puppet government of Manchukuo, the puppet government in Mongolia, the puppet government in Sinkiang, and other regional "independent kingdoms" of warlords. Critics of the Nationalist government have been unfairly ignoring this fact and unreasonably expecting the Nationalists to effectively carry on the national reconstruction task when the war devastation was going on full blast. Yet, Nationalist China managed to fight her war with Japan independently for the first four years without any aid from Western countries. China was ravaged by war which led to disruptions of food production and distribution. Rampant inflation caused further economic distress and social crises. Professor Chi-ming Hou and his colleagues have put the war economy in a much better perspective with their critical and incisive scholarship in their essay on "Economic Development and Public Finance in Wartime China."

As for political construction, it is a stark fact that the Chinese Communists skillfully masterminded a plausible campaign for *democracy* as a battle cry for mobilizing intellectuals and politicians to side with them against the Nationalists. Many intellectuals and members of the Democratic League who thought of the CCP as the champion of democracy, were willing either to run political interference for them or fight their ideological battles. The Nationalist government was in good faith when it decided to set up the National Political Council to reach a national consensus through cooperation with non-KMT leaders and members of other political groups. It was an honest effort on the government's part to invite the

CCP, the Democratic League and others to participate in the discussion of national issues and the policy-making process. It may be a political truism that war and democracy should go hand in hand and a coalition government could be formed to include the CCP and members of other political parties or groups. But the CCP had grown so strong militarily and really wanted nothing but a total victory. Unlike Euro-communists the CCP had never been interested in parliamentary politics sharing the political power through a coalition government. Professor Sih cited the eye-witness report of Li Huang, founder of the China Youth Party and a participant of the National Political Council: "The KMT originally intended to request the CCP to give up their army as a prerequisite for political collaboration. For this reason, we, the third party, proposed at the very beginning of the Political Consultative Conference a policy of 'Nationalization of the Army and Democratization of Political Institution.'" But the CCP refused to relinquish its army. How could it be possible for the government to make democracy work, if the CCP was only interested in military victory and not in political reconciliation?

What would happen to the constitutional government and democracy in the United States, if a democratic administration was challenged militarily by a well-armed Republican Party who professed to gain their political power through the barrel of a gun? Simply looking at the sad historical facts this was much the situation of the Nationalist leaders before their flight to Taiwan. Chang Po-chun, Lo Lung-chi, Chu An-ping, among others, during the so-called "hundred-flower bloom and hundred-school contend" campaign in 1957, one would know that it is utterly casuistic for any thinking scholar still trying to pre-empt those facts and still insisting that the CCP's proletarian dictatorship of the people of today was nothing different than their outcry for democracy prior to 1949? American students in my class on Chinese Communist Documents can fully appreciate the

predicament and ordeal of the members of the Democratic League of yesteryear.

Within a short period of forty years in the history of contemporary China (1937-1977), this writer was very fortunate to be able to observe several undisputable political facts: one is that the PPC did include the members of the CCP, the Democratic League and other political parties under the Nationalist government which tolerated their criticism and open discussions of national affairs during and after the war. By contrast, the CCP's People's Political Consultative Conference which was organized by the CCP to include the members of the Democratic League and other parties in 1949 when the CCP came to power, was not allowed to criticize the CCP as the latter had done to the KMT during the war and prior to 1949. During the ephemeral campaign of the "hundred-flower bloom and hundred-school contend" in 1957, the defiant members of the dissenting Democratic League and other political groups were either disgraced or silenced by the proletarian dictatorship. The second fact is that many political and intellectual supporters chose to blame the traditional culture for foot-binding and thought stagnation, but deliberately ignored the CCP's mind-binding and thought strangulation.

For the sake of defending the integrity of historical scholarship in contemporary China, and honoring the sacrifices of many patriotic fighters during the war, the authors of this excellent anthology of the Sino-Japanese war history 1937-1945 have made an admirable contribution to the indictment of intellectual perjury which has been committed so long by many in their world of sciolistic, snobbish and journalistic sinology. This volume serves as a constant reminder that the true value of a political polity must be measured by its commitment to and its action of humanistic goodness and I welcome its publication with three cheers.

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