

# Memory Recently Retold: The Chinese Historical Writing of the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II

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## Abstract

Memories regarding the history of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) and World War II (1939-1945) have always been refreshed in the minds of contemporaries through the retelling of “historical war stories” in various forms including books, posters, films and other media presentations. However, these retellings are often criticised by some academics as distortion of historical facts. This is because many of the present generation of readers and audiences were not even born at the time the events happened. Thus, “historical facts” of this era are, in reality, very vague in people’s minds and their “facts” are often simply a construction of frequently retold “historical war stories” mixed with imagination. This article will argue that even immediately after the end of both wars in 1945, fresh history memory was already distorted, with China being the main victim. Following the end of World War II, there was an extensive publication of books and periodicals about the war. However, through varied interpretations of primary sources and use of visual materials in different ways, various positions were created to suit specific needs for justification of China’s desire to be part of the camp of world powers after 1945. Similar diverse positions were also used to make political arguments criticising both the Axis and Allied Powers for working toward different political ends.

## Keywords

Second Sino-Japanese War, World War II, history memory, historical writing, translation

Historical writings and commentaries on the responsibility of Japan in the Second Sino-Japanese War have always provoked controversies between China and Japan. The publication of *New History Textbook* by Fusosha Publishing in 2001 claimed that the Japanese invasion of Asian countries during World War II as the “Greater East Asia War” implied that the war was the liberation of Asians from the colonial rule of Europe and U.S. The textbook also did not mention the war crimes which the Japanese armies committed in China like forcing Chinese women to be sex slaves, or so-called “comfort women”, for Japanese soldiers. The term “Nanking

Massacre” was also changed in the textbook to “Nanking Incident” in order to tone down the crime of massacring Chinese civilians. Finally, the textbook was accepted by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 2005 which provoked a great protest from China and South Korea that condemned the book’s favoring

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of Japan's military expansion in the early World War II political atmosphere (Bu 2009). The visiting of Yasukuni Shrine, where World War II class A war criminals of Japan are worshiped by Japanese premiers and councilors, was also condemned by the Chinese government which said that its Japanese counterpart did not have a "rightful understanding" of history. The different interpretations of the Second Sino-Japanese War by both sides become the key factor leading to the ups and downs of Sino-Japanese relations in recent years.

There are various previous historical studies regarding the political legacies of World War II. For historians of West Europe, their studies of the origin of totalitarianism in the inter-war period provided them the answers about the way of dealing with new totalitarian threat from Soviet Union in the post-war era (Bosworth 1993). While the Chinese government has, since the 1980s, made international political use of the Japanese history textbook controversy as the "history card" to oppose Japan's increase in defense spending and its seeking of a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (Roy 2009). Besides, literature works on the Second Sino-Japanese War, which were published from the late 1940s to 1970s on both sides of Taiwan Strait, also showed ideological dichotomy between the Nationalists (KMT) and the Communists (CCP) of China (Tsong 1997). Williamsen (1998) also had a comprehensive annotated bibliographical essay on English academic works about the war publishing from the 1950s to 1990s.

As told in famous quotation of Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce: "all history is contemporary history" (Le Goff 1992), this article attempts to scatter the dust over historical narrative of Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II by focusing analysis on Chinese historical writings on the wars published from 1945 to 1949. It was during this period that the memories regarding the wars were fresh in Chinese people's minds and narratives were relatively less distorted by

political ideology compared to more recent memories obtained after the post-war rise of patriotism in China. Apart from the reflection of the different ideologies of KMT and CCP toward international relations during the cold-war period, the elements emphasizing the China's position as "victim", "peaceful nation", "laggard of economic development" within the historical narrative, also became the distant historical origin of the Chinese government's "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*) diplomacy and "development is fundamental truth" (*fazhan shi ying daoli*) in the twenty-first century.

### JUSTIFICATION OF CHINESE POSITION: CHINESE HISTORICAL WRITING ON WORLD WAR II

One of the main reasons why Chinese authors were eager to publish historical works on World War II was to present a Chinese interpretation about what had just happened in an event in which China itself had participated. This argument was well illustrated by Chu Yukun, in the preface to his book, *The History of the World War II*, which was written on April 15, 1945, in Shanghai, even before the end of the war.

I start to write this book in the time of darkness. I regard this work as "devoting myself to the country through literary works". Regarding the period of the war of resistance, it was a holy enterprise that was of equal importance to the rest of the war effort. Therefore, I consider finishing this book as my only spiritual consolation and my biggest mission when I stayed in Japanese-occupied territory. As a result, I had a noble ambition when writing this book in the time of darkness—that it be published immediately once victory is achieved, so that it will not only be the first book published in the nation, but also the first published in the world. The publishing industry of our nation in the past always relied on books written by foreigners, especially those in the field of international relations, most of which were translated works. From the outbreak of the European War [i.e., the invasion of Poland in 1939], I determined to write such a book to set a new example for our nation's publishing industry. (Chu 1946)

In this regard, Chu started to collect materials regarding World War II and write his book from September 1, 1939 to December 8, 1941, when the Pacific War began. However, once Shanghai was occupied by Japanese force, all international news agencies stationed in Shanghai lost their freedom and could not report any news regarding the war that was free from censorship by the Japanese authorities. As a result, what the newspapers reported in Shanghai was Japanese propaganda rather than accurate news reportage of the war, and it could not be used as source material to write the book. At that time, Chu still worked at the French news agency, Agence Havas, so he only received true information regarding the course of the European War through reading “confidential reports” in secret.

Under these circumstances, Chu’s book only covered the war in Europe while the history of the Pacific War in the Far East was almost wholly neglected. Chu wanted to write another book on the history of China’s war of resistance, but did not have the time to do so because he needed to take charge of the business of *Wen Hui Bao*, a Chinese left-wing newspaper and his teaching duties in universities in Shanghai (Chu 1946).

One of the key meetings, which officially marked the peace settlement after World War II, was the Potsdam Conference. The conference was attended by the three major powers: the U.S.S.R., the U.S. and Britain, which were represented by Joseph Stalin, Harry S. Truman and Winston Churchill, and later Churchill’s successor Clement Attlee respectively, from July 17 to August 2, 1945. One of the main conference decisions relating to China was the announcement of the Potsdam Declaration issued by Truman, Churchill and the chairman of the Nationalist Government of China, Chiang Kai-shek on July 26, 1945, concerning the terms of Japan’s surrender in the foreseeable end of the war. Therefore, many narratives and commentaries by authors on the history of World War II reflected different views regarding China’s

position in the world in relation to the peace settlements and the international power structure, dominated by Western powers.

The secret agreement between the U.S.S.R., the U.S. and Britain, which granted the control of Dalin (Dalian) and Port Arthur in the Liaodong Peninsula and the privileges of railways in southern Manchuria to the U.S.S.R. in exchange for the declaration of war against Japan 90 days after the defeat of Nazi Germany, was in fact made during the earlier Yalta Conference held in February 1945. The details of this conference were not known to the Chinese government and thus the Chinese common people. Therefore, the Yalta conference was not covered in most of the historical works written by Chinese authors during the period between 1945 and 1949. Chu wrote in his book that during the early part of the Potsdam Conference, the U.S.S.R., the U.S. and Britain decided “a certain type of secret agreement” under which the latter two agreed to transfer the territories in the southern part of the Sakhalin and Kuril Islands to the U.S.S.R. from Japan, while the question of Dalin and Port Arthur was to be solved by direct negotiation between the governments of the U.S.S.R. and China. Chu’s book did not condemn such a secret agreement which ignored the right of China’s government to participate in the Yalta Conference, as many Chinese critics said later. Instead, Chu justified the need to keep the agreement secret because Japan, had it known of this agreement, would have launched an offensive attack before the Red Army of the U.S.S.R. had been dispatched to the Far East (Chu 1946).

*The Pictorial History of the World War II*, which was edited by Shu (1946) and published by the United Pictorial, took the standpoint of highlighting China’s contribution to World War II and adopted a more or less pro-KMT stance. As the organiser of the United Pictorial, Shu emphasised that by relying on the power of all Chinese people, China was able to continue fighting for 14 years before and during World War II.

Shu argued that in the first four years of the War of Resistance (1937-1941), China fought alone without the support of the Allies. Relying on the endurance of the Chinese people and the spirit of sharing a hatred of, and a determination to fight against, the Japanese invaders, China was able to sustain itself in the battlefield under disadvantages until the change in the international situation, that is, the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941.

This justified China obtaining the status of “the nation with the most senior qualification of fighting in the war among the members of the United Nations”. Besides, Shu pointed out that since China had fought the Axis Power for the longest period of time, had suffered the largest number of casualties, and had successfully contained numerous numbers of the Allies’ enemy, namely the Japanese armies, this justified the rise in China’s status during the war. Shu also noted two points: Firstly, Britain and the U.S. abolished their extra-territorial rights in China and returned leased territories to China. Secondly, during the Cairo Conference in 1941, both Britain and the U.S. had recognised China’s right to restore its sovereignty over Taiwan and Manchuria. Shu commented that: “The bleeding of our blood is not worth nothing”. However, Shu’s work did not mention the secret agreement made by the U.S.S.R., the U.S. and Britain at the Yalta Conference, which in fact showed that China’s status as one of the “Big Four Powers” with the U.S.S.R., the U.S. and Britain was not true in reality. Instead, Shu put the fault on China’s side, in that it did not fulfill the task of rebuilding the nation during the war due to various political and economic reasons. Besides, Shu condemned the outbreak of civil war after World War II which destroyed the pride established during the War of Resistance. Shu argued that if China did not stop the civil war immediately, she would soon revert to the status of other nation’s colonies and the victim of invasion, and would continue to be the slave of other nations (Shu 1946).

## RETELLING HISTORY IN A CHINESE CONTEXT: THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF FOREIGN WORKS ON WORLD WAR II

### *Our Enemy Japan (Riben Neimu)*

*Our Enemy Japan*, published in 1942, was written by Wilfrid Fleisher, an American correspondent of the *New York Herald Tribune*, who had been stationed in Japan for 17 years. The aims of the book, as recounted in Fleisher’s original preface, were to tell Americans what sort of people they were fighting against, to explain the military mindset of the Japanese who had long conceived the dream of conquering Asia, the strength of Japan’s army and navy, and the weakness of its economic position (Fleisher 1944). *Our Enemy Japan* contains nine chapters which discuss the rise of Japan since the opening by the American Commodore Perry in 1853, the rise of militarism, relations with Germany, Japanese leaders, the Japanese army and navy, the economic position, the Washington negotiations between Japan and the U.S. before the Pacific War, and the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The book also contains appendices consisting of American diplomatic and political documents regarding U.S.-Japanese relations.

The Chinese translation of *Our Enemy Japan* was called *Riben Neimu (The Inside Story of Japan)* and was translated by Tung Defang and published by the Department of History and Politics of the Ministry of Defense of China in September 1946. Since the contents essentially focused on Japan, apart from the appendices which were deleted in the Chinese version because it was targeting the general public as its audience, the book was basically a direct translation of Fleisher’s work. However, the book preface written by Wu Shi, the publisher’s reader and a member of the general staff of the Ministry of Defense, still showed the KMT government’s standpoint regarding the reasons for the defeat of Japan in the war. Wu pointed out that some of the commentaries regarding the defeat and surrender of Japan were due to the

bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with American nuclear weapons. Wu argued that the defeat of Japan began with the invasion of China in the Mukden Incident and the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1931 and 1937 respectively, and was confirmed by the Pearl Harbor Attack in 1941. The first main reason for Japan's defeat was that it had started the war with unrighteous aims which guaranteed her defeat. The second important reason, as Wu said, was Japan "as a nation of a small territorial size and population becoming the enemy of a nation with a large territorial size and population; and a nation with poor economic resources becoming the enemy of a nation with abundant economic resources". The former and later enemies of Japan in fact referred to China and U.S. respectively. Wu even argued that even though Japan's national power was as strong as Germany's, he concluded that the final fate of Germany, or even Napoleon Bonaparte and Julius Caesar who were also conquerors in their own time, were unsatisfactory. Quoting traditional Chinese history wisdom, Wu argued that there were many people in history who were so-called "unscrupulous heroes", in that taking the role of dictator and conqueror, or militarism and an aggressive foreign policy in the modern sense, finally guaranteed their defeat in the end. In this regard, Wu supported the publication of *Our Enemy Japan*, as the way to promote traditional Chinese national ethic, that is to say, establishing friendly peaceful relationship with its neighbors (Fleisher 1947). In other words, China was portrayed as a large and traditionally peaceful nation, which accounted for its defeat of Japan in World War II.

Regardless of the portrait of China as a peaceful nation, the reason for the translation of foreign works about Japanese political and military development before World War II was well illustrated by the translator's preface in Shōzō Mori's book, *Xuanfeng Er Shi Nian: Riben Jie Jin Neimu (The Whirlwind for Twenty Years: The Inside Story of Japan in Shōwa's Period)*:

Japan is defeated today, but we Chinese, who were the victims most devastated by Japanese imperialist invasion, should not forget about the past of Japan easily. We should remember well that Japanese calculations over China, were a long-lasting conspiracy...

The revival of Japan may take thirty to fifty years, but for the sake of preventing the rise of Japan again, especially the success of Japan's present conspiracy of "finding reincarnation in another's corpse", we not only need to be on the alert, but also need to catch up with the development of Japan in the period of thirty of fifty years.

In order to achieve the above aim, the first criteria is that we must understand the real reasons for the defeat of Japan in the war. We must understand about the past twenty years, especially the internal political situation in Japan in the last ten years... (Mori 1946)

Therefore, the publication of translations of the works written by American and Japanese authors about Japan's political, economic and military development aimed to provide knowledge to Chinese readers in two areas: first, to prevent the revival of Japanese militarism; and second, the wish for the revival of China's national power after World War II, so that it would not again be a victim of Japanese militarism in the future.

### *The Stilwell Papers (Shi Di Wei Riji)*

*The Stilwell Papers*, was a collection from Joseph Stilwell's diary covering the period of time from the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941 to his being relieved of his duty as the American Chief of Staff to the Chiang Kai-shek's government in China in October 1944. They were edited by Theodore H. White, a famous American correspondent for *Time Magazine* in wartime China, who also exposed the news of the famine in Henan province in 1943 and the failure of the KMT government to provide relief to the victims. White continued to report on the weakness of the KMT army in fighting against the Japanese army, which was contrary to the wartime propaganda policy of the Allies. *The Stilwell Papers* showed the role of Stilwell in leading Chinese armies in the campaign fought against the Japanese in Burma from 1942 to

1944, plus his narratives about the Chiang Kai-shek's government that revealed the root of the so-called "Stilwell Crisis", which marked a direct confrontation and argument between Stilwell and Chiang. Chiang could not endure his military leadership being overtaken by Stilwell and American president Franklin Roosevelt was eventually forced to replace Stilwell with Albert C. Wedemeyer for the sake of the unity between China and the U.S. in fighting the Japanese. *The Stilwell Papers* were published in New York in 1948 while its partial Chinese translation, called *Shi Di Wei Riji (The Dairy of Joseph Stilwell)*, was published in Shanghai in December 1948.

Shanghai was still under the control of the KMT government despite the coming of complete defeat of the KMT forces by the Chinese communists in the civil war, therefore chapter 10 of the original book, entitled "Chiang Kai-shek and His Government", was revised in the Chinese translation. The main differences, through textual analysis, were revealed to be as follows:

Firstly, the sub-section title which was originally written as "Chiang Kai-shek", was "This guy XXX" (*XXX zhe ge ren*) in the translated version. Besides, in the original main text, if it mentioned the name "Chiang Kai-shek", it was "XXX" in the translated version;

Secondly, the original version wrote about Stilwell's faith in Chinese soldiers and Chinese people as "fundamentally great, democratic, misgoverned. No bars of caste or religion... Honest, frugal, industrious, cheerful, independent, tolerant, friendly, courteous". The translated version kept all the above mentioned good qualities except "misgoverned", which was replaced with "boundless prospects".

Thirdly, the entire sub-section about the weakness of the Chinese army in the original text was deleted from the section. For example, Stilwell wrote "the average strength per division instead of 10,000 is not more than 5,000... the troops are unpaid, unfed, shot with sickness and malnutrition... conscription is so-and-so" and so on, concluding: "How would you start to make such an army effective?"

Fourthly, the entire sub-section "Philosophy as Applied to Supply" was deleted in the translated version. Stilwell criticised American support of the regime of Chiang

Kai-shek as in fact alien to the aim of fighting Nazi Germany, "We were fighting Germany to tear down the Nazi system—one-party government, supported by the Gestapo and headed by an unbalanced man with little education. We had plenty to say against such a system. China, our ally, was being run by a one-party government (the Kuomintang), support by a Gestapo (Tai Li's organisation) and headed by an unbalanced man with little education". This implied that Chiang was more or less the "Adolf Hitler" of China. (Stilwell 1948a, 1948b)

Apart from the direct criticism of Chiang Kai-shek's military leadership, the weakness of the Chinese army and one-party rule of the KMT, the translated version did not delete or revise Stilwell's description of the differences between the KMT and the CCP as follows:

[KMT] Corruption, neglect, chaos, economy, taxes, words and deeds. Hoarding, black market, trading with enemy.

Communist program... reduce taxes, rents, interest. Raise production, and standard of living. Participate in government. Practice what they preach. (Stilwell 1948a, 1948b)

Yet, the Chinese translator or the publisher's reader might have not understood "peanut" as a derogatory term referring to Chiang Kai-shek in Stilwell's diary on September 7, 1944, so the translated text made an almost direct translation of the original text without using "XXX" to replace "peanut" (*hua sheng mi*) as follows:

The G-mo calls. Date at 9:30, Hurley and Nelson at 11:00. Why me, ahead of them? *Love feast* [italicized text is deleted in translated version]. Peanut went right into it, and told me that up to now my work had been 100 percent military—now, as Commander of the Chinese Army, it would be 60 percent military and 40 percent political.

[He] said that if I used the Reds, they would have to acknowledge the authority of the National Military Council. He would advise me from time to time. He want no k'o ch'i (politenesses) between us. He had full confidence in me. *Kidded about my saying Chinese commanders were no good--asked about commanders and divisions in Burma* [italicized text is deleted in translated version]. (Stilwell 1948a, 1948b)

Besides, any text implying or suggesting the overthrow of Chiang's leadership, that is Chiang Kai-shek and chief-of-staff Ho Ying-chin, as the key to China's success in defeating the last massive Japanese attack in mainland China as shown in Stilwell's dairy entry on September 9, 1944, was totally deleted from the translated version as follows:

Disaster approaching at Kweilin, nothing to stop the Japs—about 50,000 demoralized Chinese in the area against nine Jap divisions. Chinese have had no replacements. Jap units are filled up. It's a mess and of course all they think of is what we can give them. *Sun Fo want us to fly in American troops. Another wants weapons. What they ought to do is shoot the G-mo and Ho and the rest of the gang* [italicized text is deleted in translated version]. (Stilwell 1948a, 1948b)

Stilwell's criticism of the American policy of supporting Chiang Kai-shek and Stilwell's unwillingness to stop alarmism about Chiang were deleted in the translated version:

The picture of this little rattlesnake being backed up by a great democracy, and showing his backside in everything he says and does, would convulse you if you could get rid of your gall bladder. But to have to sit there and be dignified, instead of bursting into guffaws, is too much to ask for the pay I get. (Stilwell 1948a)

Stilwell's criticism, written in a letter sent to his wife on September 17, 1944, about British participation in the war against the Japanese, which simply aimed to regain Hong Kong and which in fact did not contribute a lot to American military operations, was also deleted from the translated version due to sensitivity over the Hong Kong question:

I see that the Limeys are going to rush to our rescue in the Pacific. Like hell. They are going to continue this fight with their mouths. Four or five battleships will appear and about ten RAF planes will go to Australia but in twenty years the schoolbooks will be taking about "shoulder to shoulder" and "the Empire struck with all its might against the common enemy" and all that crap. The idea, of course, is

to horn in at Hongkong again, and our Booby is sucked in. (Stilwell 1948a)

### *Thunder out of China (Zhongguo Bao Feng Yu)*

*Thunder out of China* was written by Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby and published in 1946. Starting from early 1944, White began writing the book, which doubted the leadership of the KMT's headman, Chiang Kai-shek, during the war in China. He argued that "the story of the China war is the story of the tragedy of Chiang Kai-shek, a man who misunderstood the war as badly as the Japanese or the Allied technicians of victory" (White and Jacoby 1946). White also predicted the outbreak of civil war in China, and that Chiang would be defeated, even with American support. White argued that the Chinese communists would be successful in taking over China:

The Communists, grew from an army of 85,000 to an army of a million, from the governors of 1,500,000 peasants to the masters of 90,000,000. The Communists used no magic; they knew the changes the people wanted, and they sponsored these changes... the Communists had the people with them, and with the people they made their own new justice. (White and Jacoby 1946)

Since the standpoint of the publisher of *Time Magazine*, Henry Luce, was to support Chiang's position, White finally resigned in 1945. As a result of his writing and alleged support for the Chinese communists, he became regarded as a left-wing activist by some anti-communist and right-wing conservative organisations in the U.S.

As a result, in June 1949, the Chinese translation of *Thunder out of China* was published in Shanghai, which was then occupied by the Chinese Communist Forces. In the preface to the translated work, Edgar Snow, the author of *Red Star Over China*, praised the book for exposing the truth about American post-war policy toward China. Firstly, apart from defeating the three Axis powers, the American intervention in

Asia did not further liberate all nations and peoples; instead, American power was used to restore the old order. Putting this objective in China's case, Snow argued that the U.S. tried to maintain a social order with the type of "living fossil" supported by the KMT. Through the military ineffectiveness, political corruption and indefensible morality of the dictatorship of the KMT, Snow argued that the regime was totally unrelated to the military and political aims of American participation in World War II. Therefore, he thought that the Chinese communists, whom he called "dissenters", were justified in obtaining a large amount of weapons from surrendered Japanese armies and in mobilising the people in order to establish a self-determination force, something that the U.S. should not intervene in. Therefore, Snow supported the narrative of White and Jacoby in the book which clearly showed the fault of Chiang Kai-shek in viewing Joseph Stilwell and the Chinese communists as a more dangerous enemy than Japan, as well as the relationship between Chiang and the other powerful clans of Sung, Hung and Chen's families, and the American fault in stirring up civil war in China (White and Jacoby 1949).

### **JUSTIFICATION OF POST-WAR POSITIONS: PRO-KMT AND PRO-CCP NARRATIVES**

*Di Er Ci Da Zhan Huiyi Ge (The Song of Remembering World War II)* was written by Yu Youren, a senior revolutionary and KMT member, and published in 1948. This booklet, which was in fact a long poem written by Yu commenting on World War II, reflected China's mistakes in diplomatic policy during World War II as follows:

I praise you, memorial to Cairo, the benefits of Cairo were in fact a lot.

I surprise you, memorial to Crimea, the participants of Crimea Conference could not escape their responsibilities.

I encourage you, memorial to Potsdam, heaven does not care about the Potsdam Declaration. (Yu 1948)

The first sentence of the poem indicated that the Cairo Conference heralded the rise of the international status of China. The second sentence mentioned Crimea, referring to the Yalta Conference in February 1945, where the U.S.S.R., the U.S. and Britain met secretly and betrayed the sovereign rights of China in exchange for the Soviet Union's participation in the war against Japan. Therefore, Yu condemned such a secret conference and that all three countries should take responsibility. The third sentence mentioned Potsdam, referring to the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945, which was long regarded by Chinese commentary as another occasion where China demonstrated its rising international status in the world and marked the fate of Japan and permanent world peace afterwards. Yu did not give an overwhelmingly positive comment on the Potsdam Conference, but instead implied that the Potsdam Declaration was useless in restoring China's sovereign rights in Manchuria, Darlin and Port Arthur, once the Big Three Powers had already reached a secret agreement at the Yalta Conference.

Yu even made a pessimistic judgment about the post-war situation of China, as follows:

Remembering wild Divine Land, bursting into tears for eight years, everybody called for resistance towards invasions... both you [Japan] and I [China] were burnt to cinders, I am worse than you. Your defeat only needed self-reflection, my victory lead to turmoil of the whole nation. You retreated from the land "stolen from China", but I scream for hunger and coldness, suffer from homeless and miserable situation, and cannot make production even with thousands acreages of fertile farmland. Having so-called relief materials, we receive such relief but difficult to satisfy our bellies and keep us warm. (Yu 1948)

In other words, despite the recovery of extra-territorial rights and leased territories from the U.S. and Britain after the Cairo Conference, both countries made no extra sacrifice because they had already lost these privileges when Japan declared war on them in 1941. However, China's victory did not



truly grant it the right of recovering all its sovereign rights, but worse it still relied on relief from America, making it seem that China was in a worse situation than defeated Japan. Reading between the lines, Yu's comments in the poem showed that he and other members of the KMT government were dissatisfied with the international system which did not do justice in recognising the contribution of China in World War II.

The pro-CCP periodicals and books more or less shared the same attitude of criticising the international system dominated by the Western nations, primarily Britain and U.S. The Chinese translated article, entitled *Di Er Ci Shijie Da Zhan Milu (The Secret Record of World War II)*, published as a series in a pro-CCP periodical, *Zhishi (Knowledge)* from November 1948 to April 1949, more or less reflected the communist criticism of the international system dominated by leading capitalist countries like Britain and the U.S. before and after World War II.

For example, the first article in the series called the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as a "war peddler", and criticised what he wrote in his memoir, *The World War II*, as simply justification of the British diplomatic policy in the inter-war period by distorting historical facts. The article condemned "British imperialism", saying that it remained irresolute and hesitant during wartime, being chaotic during the time of failure and being arrogant during the time of victory. The article also criticised Churchill regarding the fact that everyone had forgotten his organising the military invasion of the Soviet Union (Ya Ma Xue Fu 1948).

The third article in the series also criticised the argument by a "capitalist historian" which mentioned British and French appeasement policy toward German annexation of the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia as being the way to save Czechoslovakia from the risk of invasion from Germany. The article argued that in fact this was a conspiracy to divert Hitler's aggression to the East,

that is, the Soviet Union (Mi Kai Luo Fu 1948).

The sixth article in the series also gave an assurance that the secret activities of American chemical enterprises in supporting the re-militarisation of Germany to make a profit in the future war was one of the main causes of World War II (Lu Bin Si Tan 1949).

The book *Di Er Ci Shijie Da Zhan (The Second World War)*, written by Xu Xian and published by left-wing publisher, the Joint Publishing Company, in 1949, shared the same attitude of criticising some British and American "anti-revolutionaries" who took advantage of the death of American president Franklin Roosevelt. In doing so they did not fulfill the agreement made at the Yalta Conference that recognised the establishment of the government of Poland by the exiled Polish government in the Soviet Union, and advocated allowing the exiled Polish government in London take charge of the future Polish government (Xu 1949). In short, the pro-CCP or left-wing authors of the history of World War II were skeptical about the existing international system dominated by capitalist countries which they believed had fuelled the outbreak of World War II.

## CONCLUSIONS

This preliminary study of the published books and articles about the history of World War II published in China from 1945 to 1949 shows the politicisation of the historical narrative of events, directly related to China. This was true both in the case of pro-KMT authors who did not accept the criticism of the faults of Chiang Kai-shek or China in World War II, and the U.S.S.R., in the case of pro-CCP authors. The pro-CCP writers had already adopted the mindset of the Cold War in reviewing the course of World War II, which they thought was rooted in the conspiracy of the capitalist bloc in threatening the genuine international peace advocated by the communist bloc. Besides, the historical narrative also shows the

reflection of some Chinese authors about Chiang's stance in the Stilwell crisis, which accounted for the final betrayal of China's sovereign rights in the Yalta Conference. In other words, Chinese historical writing about World War II not only acted as the justification for the victory and international respect China should enjoy after the war, but also as the lesson for China's future development in the post-war period.

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