

For those who want to understand a little better the bad blood that currently exists between Japan and China The Rape of Nanking by Iris Chang is an excellent place to start.

Though I was familiar with some of Japan's conduct during WWII from reading Ghost Soldiers by Hampton Sides (this book detailed the daring rescue of American POWs who had survived the Bataan Death March only to face certain execution in the closing days of WWII), when it came to the Japanese invasion of China during the 1930s I was totally ignorant. Given the fact that, by treaty, the United States is obligated to defend Japan, Americans should be aware of the past conduct of her "ally."

Ms. Chang writes that the Japanese initiated an undeclared war on China with the blowing up of railroad tracks in southern Manchuria in September 1931. The intention was to derail an express train, but it failed, so the Japanese murdered the Chinese guards and made up a story about Chinese sabotage. Using this incident as an excuse the Japanese seized Manchuria.

In 1932, with tensions rising, five Japanese Buddhist priests were attacked by a mob in Shanghai, leaving one priest dead. Japan bombed the city immediately afterwards causing tens of thousands of civilians to die.

However, it was not until July 1937 that an all out war began when a Japanese soldier failed to report for roll call the morning after conducting operations (the previous night) during which shots were fired at the Japanese. The Chinese fort of Wanping was approached by Japanese troops who demanded to be allowed to search for the missing soldier. When their request was denied the Chinese fort was shelled.

By August 1937 Shanghai was attacked. The city was able to hold out until November, shattering the expectations of the Japanese who had hoped to conquer all of China within 3-months.

A preview of what awaited Nanking, the Chinese capitol, occurred on November 19 in Suzhou. The city's population of 350,000 dropped to less than 500 following days of destruction by Japanese troops. Named "the Venice of China" by Westerners for its canals and bridges, it was one of China's oldest cities. In addition to wanton murder,

buring of ancient landmarks, and the like the Japanese abducted thousands of women for sexual slavery.

Surrounded by a massive stone wall Nanking was a major city of over 1-million people in 1937. With Japanese troops approaching, only around half a million people remained by December. Bolstering this number were tens of thousands of refugees from the nearby countryside and approximately 90,000 Chinese troops who were stationed in the area.

Ms. Chang does an excellent job detailing what went wrong with the defense of the city. In a nutshell, Chaing Kai-shek, the Nationalist leader, couldn't decide if he wanted to defend the city or not. What resulted was a half-hearted defense that was further complicated by a disorganized last minute retreat across the Yangtze River, which offered the only means of escape. This was how 50,000 Japanese troops were able to overwhelm the defenders and initiate a bloodbath of outrageous proportions.

On December 13, 1937 the city officially fell. Upon entering the walled city the mayhem began. It is important to note that prior to entering an order had come down from the high command (how high in the chain of command is still in dispute) to "KILL ALL CAPTIVES." Needless to say this order was followed to the letter.

Given that people may question the veracity of reports from the Chinese let's begin with what Japanese military correspondent Imai Masatake saw:

"On Hsiakwan wharves, there was the dark silhouette of a mountain made of dead bodies. About fifty to one hundred people were toiling there, dragging bodies from the mountain of corpses and throwing them into the Yangtze River. The bodies dripped blood, some of them still alive and moaning weakly, their limbs twitching. The laborers were busy working in total silence, as in a pantomime. In the dark one could barely see the opposite bank of the river. On the pier was a field of glistening mud under the moon's dim light. Wow! That's all blood!

"After a while, the coolies had done their job of dragging corpses and the soldiers lined them up along the river. Rat-tat-tat machine gun fire could be heard. The coolies fell backwards into the river and were swallowed by the raging currents. The pantomime was over.

"A Japanese officer at the scene estimated that 20,000 persons

had been executed."

Another military correspondent Omata Yukio described a similar scene:

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"Those in the first row were beheaded, those in the second row were forced to dump the severed bodies into the river before they themselves were beheaded. The killing went on non-stop, from morning until night, but they were only able to kill 2,000 persons in this way. The next day, tired of killing in this fashion, they set up machine guns. Two of them raked a cross-fire at the lined up prisoners. Rat-tat-tat-tat. Triggers were pulled. The prisoners fled into the water, but no one was able to make it to the other shore."

Former soldiers have also come forward with their own accounts. Nagatomi Hakudo talked about his experience:

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"I remember being driven in a truck along a path that had been cleared through piles of thousands and thousands of slaughtered bodies. Wild dogs were gnawing at the dead flesh as we stopped and pulled a group of Chinese prisoners out of the back. Then the Japanese officer proposed a test of my courage. He unsheathed his sword, spat on it, and with a sudden mighty swing he brought it down on the neck of a Chinese boy cowering before us. The head was cut clean off and tumbled away on the group as the body slumped forward, blood spurting in two great gushing fountains from the neck. The officer suggested I take the head home as a souvenir. I remember smiling proudly as I took his sword and began killing people."

He goes on:

"Few know that soldiers impaled babies on bayonets and tossed them still alive into pots of boiling water. They gang-raped women from the ages of twelve to eighty and then killed them when they could no longer satisfy sexual requirements. I beheaded people, starved them to death, burned them, and buried them alive, over two hundred in all. It is terrible that I could turn into an animal and do these things. There are really no words to explain what I was doing. I was truly a devil."

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Killing was turned into a game with various contests developed. One of the best documented was between Sub-Lieutenants Mukai Toshiaki and Noda Takeshi to see who could kill 100 Chinese first. The Japan Advertiser ran the story front page! (In the picture section of Ms. Chang's book you can see both men proudly standing with swords out.)

Unfortunately for the Chinese neither Mukai or Noda could decide who broke the 100 mark first, so the goal was increased to 150.

Other ways to dispose of the Chinese were: using them for live bayonet practice; burying them alive; nailing them to wooden boards then running tanks over them; gouging their eyes out, along with cutting their ears and noses off before being set on fire; being bound in groups of ten and lit on fire; forced up tall buildings then destroying the stairs and setting the building on fire; forcing them to dive into frozen ponds whereupon they were fired upon; tied up and tossed into a pond that was then inundated with hand grenades; and buried up to their waist to allow German shepherds to devour them. Though there are more ways, this provides a pretty graphic overview.

How many Chinese died? The International Military Tribunal of the Far East (IMTIFE), otherwise known as the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, concluded that approximately 260,000 people lost their lives. Other figures are discussed, including one as high as 377,400.

As the title of Ms. Chang's book demonstrates it was the widespread incidence of rape that caught the world's attention. It is estimated that between 20,000 - 80,000 women were raped in Nanking. Making matters worse rape was outlawed by the Japanese military leading soldiers to kill their victims. One officer told his men to, "Either pay them money or kill them in some out-of-the-way place after you have finished."

Instead of reigning their men in the Japanese government sanctioned comfort houses, ie. military prostitution, near Nanking in 1938 once the international outcry became too great. Ms. Chang writes, "By luring, purchasing, or kidnapping between eighty thousand and two hundred thousand women -- most of them from the Japanese colony of Korea but many from China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia -- the Japanese military hoped to reduce the incidence of random rape of local women (thereby diminishing the opportunity for international criticism), to contain sexually transmitted diseases through the use of condoms, and to reward soldiers for fighting on the battlefield for long stretches of time."

If there can be said to be a bright spot during all of this it would have to be the creation of the Nanking Safety Zone within the city. Refugees, eventually 200,000 - 300,000 people, swarmed into a two and a half square mile zone to obtain some level of protection

provided by two dozen or so foreigners who, though unarmed, fought to keep the Japanese at bay during the initial six to eight weeks when conditions were the worst in Nanking. The elected leader of the Safety Zone was John Rabe, the leader for the Nazi party in Nanking.

Mr. Rabe worked for the Siemens China Company selling telephones and electrical equipment to the Chinese government. Born in Hamburg, Germany in 1882, he worked in China since 1908 for Siemens. In 1931 he transferred to the Nanking office from his previous position in Peking.

As early as November 25, 1937 he used his influence to ask for Adolf Hitler's support for a Safety Zone. Though unanswered he soon noticed that Japanese planes restricted their previously indiscriminate bombing to only military targets afterwards.

Rabe did not only send telegrams though, he would patrol the city trying to protect innocent civilians, with only his swastika armband for protection. He wrote to Hitler:

"Groups of 3 to 10 marauding soldiers would begin by traveling through the city and robbing whatever there was to steal. They would continue by raping the women and girls and killing anything that offered any resistance, attempted to run away from them or simply happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. There were girls under the age of 8 and women over the age of 70 who were raped and then, in the most brutal way possible, knocked down and beat up. We found corpses of women on beer glasses and others who had been lanced by bamboo shoots. I saw victims with my own eyes--I talked to some of them right before their deaths and had their bodies brought to the morgue at the Kulo hospital so that I could be personally convinced that all of these reports had touched on the truth."

On January 1, 1938 he wrote in his diary:

"The mother of a young attractive girl called out to me, throwing herself on her knees, crying, said that I should help her. Upon entering [the house] I saw a Japanese soldier lying completely naked on a young girl, who was crying hysterically. I yelled at this swine, in any language it would be understood, 'Happy New Year!' and he fled from there, naked and with his pants in his hand."

Ms. Chang writes that "The Japanese soldiers appeared to respect-- at times even fear--the Nazis of Nanking. While the Japanese privates did not hesitate to beat up the Americans, charge at them with

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bayonets, or even to push one American missionary down a flight of stairs, they exercised considerable restraint in their dealings with Rabe and his countrymen. Once, when four Japanese soldiers in the midst of raping and looting saw Eduard Sperling's swastika armband, they screamed 'Deutsche! Deutsche!' and ran away."

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Despite his service to the Chinese people, after WWII Rabe found himself in dire straights. Denounced by a fellow German, he was forced into a long "de-nazification" process. His family was forced to live on wild weeds and dry bread as work was hard to come by.

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In 1948 the Chinese learned of his fate and raising \$2,000 (\$100 million in Chinese dollars) the mayor of Nanking went to Switzerland to purchase large quantities of provisions that were subsequently delivered to Rabe. This occurred every month until the communists took over. In addition, he was offered free housing in China and a life long pension if he chose to come back. However, he died in 1950 from an artery stroke.

If there is one critique that can be leveled against Ms. Chang's book it is her numerous references to the "Holocaust," and the debunked 6-million number. Despite this one can learn a lot from her well-written and otherwise throughly researched book.

Book: The Rape of Nanking

By Iris Chang

2011 Edition

Rudy,

8-29-17

About 3 or 4 years ago I wrote this. Why exactly I don't remember, although the fact that one of the "evil" Nazis would save so many people did fascinate me. Maybe you could post it on the site. There is some graphic material contained within.

As a title perhaps "Book Review - The Rape of Nanking"

Today the letter arrived with the Bundy info. Sad they have to do it a third time. Hopefully they beat it again and really leave the feds with pie on their face.

Yours truly,

Jason

P.S. Is there a link from the site to the electronic drop box? I referenced material in the dropbox to Year of Jubilee (without thinking) to someone. If not it's not a big deal, I just wasn't sure. -JM