

A Contemporary Witness' Journal Account of the 1940 Invading Japanese Army's Fatigue Bombing of Chongqing

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Abstract

In 1940, the Japanese Army implemented "Operation 101," the carrying out of a deliberate "fatigue bombardment" against Chongqing civilian targets, in an attempt to cause popular confusion at the rear of the war, disintegrate the wartime morale of the soldiers and civilians, so as to achieve the establishment of a beachhead. However, the army and civilians of Chongqing endured suffering during the bombing, exhibiting the spirit of completely anti-war. A contemporary's journal as an eyewitness account, documenting current affairs in the manner of a contemporary, from the perspective of personal memory, provides a more realistic reproduction of the facts of the fatigue bombing and a more authentic record of the reality, area, and experience of contemporary people during the fatigue bombing. This experience not only reproduces the dehumanizing ravages of the fatigue bombing on the people at the rear of the war, but also, from a microscopic point of view, reproduces the final spiritual essence of the civilians and army of Chongqing to resist the war until the very end.

Key words: Journal; Chongqing; Bombing

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INTRIDUCTION

In 1940 and 1941, the Japanese Army implemented the "fatigue bombing" against Chongqing; Zeng Xubai has made the following description of this event: "Between the summer and fall of the 29th Year of the Republic, Japanese aircraft have continued their ongoing indiscriminate bombing; every other three to five days there will be a mad bombing outside; between that time, they will send one or two planes to circle overhead. After causing us to issue an alarm, they will float away. After another one or two hours, one or two plane will come again, and, as usual, float away. This happens repeatedly, causing us below enter anti-air attack caves, running wearily. The enemy calls this "fatigue bombing," actually causing us Chinese who lack nutrition to suffer the torment of hell. In the summer and fall of the 30th Year of the Republic, the bombing of the Japanese planes was even fiercer, truly with no interruption for more than six hours; the citizens are famished and sleep-deprived, suffering the pains of hell." (Zeng, 1988)

In the journals of contemporary people, the records of the 1940 "fatigue bombing" can be summarized according to the following aspects:

1. THEIR LONG DURATION

According to Tetsuo Maeda's *The Chongqing Bombing* records: From May 18 to September 4, 1940, the Japanese Army implemented against the interior of Sichuan "Operation 101," during which, from May 26 to August 23, they conducted the bombardment against Chongqing. During these 90 days, there were 32 days of bombing. Tetsuo Maeda writes in the section, "Day and Night Fatigue Bombing" in *The Chongqing Bombing*: This operation "took two new attack approaches that were not used last year: continuous attack, military force and weather permitting, and simultaneous continuous day and night attacks." (Maeda, 1989)

Actually, from the perspective of accounts in the journals of people of that time, this was far from the case. On April 22, Chen Kewen writes in his journal:

After five hours of worry, tired and hungry, some people simply can't suffer anymore. The alarm this time is the first one this year and lasted for such a long time, I don't know whether or not this indicated this year's air raids will be more than last year's. (Chen, 2012)

Actually, 1940's bombings were continuous to the end of the year. On December 30, Chen Kewen writes in his journal: "Last year's last enemy plane attack was on December 18; I don't know if today's alarm will be this year's last." (Ibid.)

After this, the Japanese Army continued to confirm the expectations of Chen Kewen. Checking Chen Kewen's journal we can learn: On April 25, "Before the last two alarms, a total of seven hours, I am exhausted." (Ibid.) On April 30, "I was awakened by the alarm from a dream last night. Since 2:30 am, we hide in the anti-air attack caves until dawn nearly five o'clock. Then the alarm was lifted. When we come back to bed, it is already full of sunshine through the window." (Ibid., 2012) The implementation of Japanese Army's *Operation 101* has caused unbearable hardship for Chinese people. Chen Kewen writes in his journal:

On May 20, "it has been more than seven hours. Many people still [have not] eaten dinner. The air-raid shelter life is really bitter." (Ibid., 2012) On May 21, "from 09:30 pm until 02:30 am, a total of five hours hiding inside the cave." (Ibid., 2012) On May 22, "three o'clock last night, at the dawn I came back to bed. When I was sleeping soundly, the alarm waked me again from a dream. Looking at the clock, it is 6:30 in the morning. Although exhausted and debilitated, I had to go to the anti-air attack cave in the Executive Yuan which is half a mile away to a hide again. It's been another four hours. It is 10.30 before lifting the alert." (Ibid., 2012) On May 27, "in the dream I was awakened by the alarm. Looking at my watch, it is half past four in the morning. It is gray dawn now...the enemy planes do no bomb in the city, but with more than five hours' (note: half past ten am to three p.m.) shelter life after a lunch time, everyone is exhausted." (Ibid., 2012)

2. ADOPTION OF NEW AIRCRAFT

On August 19 and 20 in 1940, the Japanese Army increased the intensity of the bombing of Chongqing. They put the Zero fighters which have not been regularized into the bombing, escort for the first time. Tetsuo Maeda in *The Chongqing Bombing* points out: "If the use of test aircraft to the front is exceptional, then, using the un-regularized attack fighters to participate in combat in the first two months in advance, there is also no precedent." (Maeda, 1989) The Zero fighter was one of the world's most advanced aircraft then. According to

Japanese military data, since the escort of Zero fighters, the effect is that "enemy aircraft have escaped and there is no enemy aircraft in the sky of Chongqing." (Ibid.) "In the case of our fighters taking complete control of the sky, we have effectively implemented the bombing and achieved remarkable achievements." (Ibid.) In the two days of bombing, the Japanese Army has put into an unprecedented number of aircraft. They drop incendiary bombs mostly. At the same time because the Japanese Army deliberately bombed water plants, it caused difficulty to put off the fire. After two days' bombing, the essence of Chongqing has been burned. The damage goes far beyond the bombing on May 3 and 4 1939, becoming the most violent bombing in the war that the Japanese Army has imposed in Chongqing. Contemporary people's journal records of the bombing in the two days can be described as thrilling.

The Journal of Chen Kewen: on August 19,

today, there are a lot of enemy aircraft, probably about two hundred, more than ever before. Locations burned in the urban areas are all commercial centers. The fire was on from three pm and until about eleven pm it was put off. The disaster is no more disastrous than the May 3 and 4 Bombing last year. (Chen, 2012)

On August 20,

today the enemy aircraft continue to attack us. The number is close as yesterday. With the brutal bombing, the downtown is on fire again. After two days of this catastrophe, the broken downtown is most likely to become ashes. The enemy's atrocities to destroy Chongqing are really almost done. The time of the air raid is still the same as yesterday. Looking far away at the fire upwards to the sky, I do not know how many compatriots lost their lives and how many compatriots are homeless. After dinner the fire was gradually extinguished. (Ibid.)

The Journal of Wang Shijie: On August 19,

concentrated bombing of the city, most of the cast are incendiary bombs. There are several fires for the moment in the city. To eight o'clock, they start getting off. This is the biggest fire in the air raid in this year. (Wang, 2013)

On August 20, "the big fires in the two days are even more miserable than the fire on May 4 last year." (Ibid.)

The Journal of Wang Zizhuang: On August 19, "we see the smoke rise into the sky. To the night, we still see a sea of red light. Banks and shopping malls downtown (the prosperous region along Xiaoshizi) were blew up." (Wang, 2001) On August 20, "on the next day, the Japanese Army attacks us with the greatest force, and flames in the city last until the next morning...essences of the city were burned into ashes. At night the city is red. It really is an unprecedented disaster of Chongqing. Several anti-air attack [caves] are surrounded by the fire and a lot of people died in them and there are approximately a thousand people. Tens of thousands of people become homeless." (Ibid.)

Wong Wenhao in his journal on August 19 writes: "the water plants were damaged, so it is difficult to put off the fire. It burns more and more fiercely." (Ibid.)

On August 21, Chen Kewen records in his journal the plight after the bombing:

The whole day we are hearing about the horrors of fire in the city in the past two days. Eight or nine tenth of the uptown and downtown were burned down and nothing was left. In several of the anti-air attack caves, many people died because the caves were closed by the fire. No less than ten to twenty thousand people become homeless. In addition, these days it is especially hot. The running water dried up. There is no water to drink in a lot of places, and therefore it is more miserable. (Chen, 2012)

On the same day, Tang Zong in his journal also writes: "walking along various disaster areas, we can see refugees seeking belongings in ashes. It is so sympathetic and sad. When the Japanese Army comes to bomb, fire spreads and the poor city becomes burned land!" (Tang, 1991) Chang Renxia also records in his journal the situation after the disaster: on August 23, "to Jiaochangkou and Guanmiao Street area, it is all in ruins." (Chang, 1999) On August 24, "from Jiaochangkou to Daliangzi Cangping Street, from Datong Street to Xiaoshizi, Xiaoliangzi Longwangmiao Street, it is all in ruins. Destroyed buildings and walls are everywhere. The bustling city is destroyed in an instant. The evil of the Japanese Imperialism is hateful." (Ibid.)

On September 13, the Japanese "Zero" fighters participated in combats for the first time. Wong Wenhao writes in his journal: "according to the Japanese records, on that day 27 Chinese aircraft were shot down and all Japanese aircraft return safely. More than half of the fifty Chinese aircraft were shot down and there were only over twenty Japanese aircraft." (Wong, 2010) The Japanese records are not untrue. The second son of Wong Wenhao, Wong Xinhan (Fengshu), as a military pilot of Kuomingdang, participated in the combat. On September 19, Wong Wenhao records in his journal that:

Fengshu writes in his letter: on September 13, more than forty planes of our Air Force E15 and E16 encountered over fifty Japanese enemy aircraft over Baishi. We were defeated and over 16 aircraft were shot down. Ten people died and many were injured. Japanese aircraft return safely. This is an unprecedented defeat of us. It is because our fighters' performance is too low. (Ibid.)

Since the Japanese Army has already fully achieved air supremacy in Chongqing, in the bombing on September 13 and 15, Japanese aircraft imitate the German bombing of London to use the strategy of brazenly low-flying dive-bombing.

Chen Kewen in his journal on September 13 writes:

Yesterday at about ten o'clock in the morning, the air raid alert was issued. At about twelve o'clock, the enemy aircraft invaded the city. The expulsion aircraft came first, flying unprecedentedly low...we were wondering that, the Japanese devils are probably to imitate the tactics of German air raid in London, using continuous air strikes to make the alarm cannot be lifted for eight to nine hours in Chongqing. (Chen, 2012)

due to higher accuracy of dive-bombing, even

attendants' room of Chiang Kai-shek was also not spared. In the journal on that day, Tang Zong writes:

It is heard that today the enemy aircraft use dive-bombing. This is an imitation of German bombing of London. In the bombing today, the sixth group and the fifth group were destroyed, and the third group and the clinic were bombed. The first group and the guardian team were destroyed and the whole roof tiles fell. The second group and the fourth group were destroyed. There is quite a lot of damage. The guardian room is quite damaged. The official residence of Chiang Kai-shek is in good condition. Eight bombs fell in the attendants' room. (Tang, 1991)

Meanwhile, since the dive-bombing is closer to the ground, it has caused a greater psychological impact on the general public. On September 15, Chen Kewen writes again: "low-flying enemy aircraft are everywhere and the sound from the aircraft is thrilling, causing great terror in the air. Though occupying safety zone in the outskirts, everyone is still in fear." (Chen, 2012) On the same day, Wang Zizhuang makes a clearer description in his journal:

The second wave is all light fighters, flying low under the cloud, imitating Germany's bombing of Britain, diving bomb. The flight speed is extremely low. Bombers are dropped vertically down. After they cast bombs in Xiaolongkan and Shapingba area, they immediately rise. Because of its high speed and fast dive, it is hard for anti-aircraft guns to hit them. The enemy aircraft are so close from the ground and it is easy to hit the target, but the sound is loud and deafening, enough to terrify people. (Wang, 2001)

3. DIVERSE WAYS OF BOMBING

The bombs that the Japanese Army cast in 1940 were mostly giant bombs. Tetsuo Maeda in *The Chongqing Bombing* records: Since "Operation 101" started, in addition to the original 60 kg and 250 kg bombs that the Japanese Army used, they are also using 800 kg bombs re-constructed by the battleship 40 cm main artilleries. Tang Zong in his journal on June 12 confirms that: "Next to the Executive Yuan and Chiang Kai-shek's mansion, a heavy bomb dropped, passing through thick mud and penetrating into two feet deep stones. It may be a five-hundred-kilogram heavy bomb." Wong Wenhao in his journal on September 17 also records that the bomb that the Japanese aircraft cast in the Executive Yuan "is eight hundred kilograms (He Yingqin estimated)". (Tang, 1991) Wang Zizhuang describes his personal experience of the giant bomb in his journal on May 28: "The bomb vibration is very vigorous. The sound in the basement is loud. Several people are scared and panic, using their hands to cover their ears." (Wang, 2001) On May 29, Wang Zizhuang reiterates that: "The bombing sound is great, as the earth cracks and the heaven collapses. The vibration more than ten miles away is also terrifying. They all are heavy bombs." (Wang, 2001) On the same day, Jin Yufu also writes in his journal that:

This afternoon, the enemy aircraft bombed Shapingba and Chongqing University area, dropped hundreds of bombs and

destroyed many houses. The scale of destruction is quite rare since the war. I sat next to the gate of the cave, feeling the shakes of cave walls as a touch of electricity. It is also like a very strong earthquake. It is getting better after a long time. (Jin, 1993)

In 1940, the Japanese Army conducted a universal bombing across Chongqing. As recorded in *Chen Kewen's Journal*: on June 13,

the bombing places spread almost all over the city. The weight of the bombs is also a few hundred of kilograms. A lot of places of the city are on fire. Although the new downtown is not on big fire, most of the houses are injured. Looking down from a height, I hardly see undamaged houses. (Chen, 2012)

On June 16, "the enemy came to complete some work destroying Chongqing in a large scale...after the alarm was lifted, looking outside, I got to know that the route of the enemy today is from Zengjiayan, along the Nationalist government, Daxigou, Zhangjia garden, Guanyinyan, Qixinggan as well as the downtown. Houses along this route were almost destroyed. Standing at a height and looking, we see five or six big fires. As far as the eye can see, it is all broken tiles and destroyed walls, casting a layer of dust. Access roads become giant pits or mounds." (Ibid.) On August 9, "Today the number of enemy aircraft is large. More than ninety planes simultaneously invade the city. The whole city is compromised. Places that have not been damaged like South Peak, Longmenhao and Haitangxi area also bombed today." (Ibid.)

4. DELIBERATE USE OF THE HOT WEATHER IN CHONGQING TO IMPLEMENT BOMBING

Chongqing, Wuhan and Nanjing have been known as the three "furnaces" in the history and Chongqing is the top 1 of the three "furnaces". In the Japanese Army's fatigue bombing in 1940 and 1941, they took full advantage of this characteristic of Chongqing to increase the suffering for the people of Chongqing. By the end of June 1940, Chongqing entered the hot summer. The Japanese Army deliberately implemented six days of fierce bombing of Chongqing on June 24 to 29. Tetsuo Maeda in *The Chongqing Bombing* once described the condition of the Japanese crew who took off from Hankou to implement the bombing mission:

by the end of June, Hankou has entered the so-called "furnace" period of summer heat, hot without any wind. Mosquitos bite, plus continuous days of the attack, the crew had tired faces and they have been exhausted. Nevertheless, the attacks did not stop. In addition, the aircraft were understaffed, so every morning in front of the deputy commander was the same tired queue of crew. (Maeda, 1989)

The Japanese crew as the victimizers was like this. The military and civilian of Chongqing as victims, they had to bear the torment of hell. As *The Journal of Chen Kewen* records: on June 25,

it was very hot. The temperature difference between inside and outside of the cave was big and it was too easy to get sick. In most air-raid caves, there were too many people in the narrow caves. It was unbearably crowded with bad air for a long time. The hardship is more than difficult to say. (Chen, 2012)

On June 26, "the weather was so hot and the enemy aircraft continued to wantonly attack, so that everyone's life was neither in order and it gave birth to a lot of hardship. This indeed was a mental threat to some people." (Ibid.) On June 29, "it has been nearly twenty days without any rain. The weather was hot and really uncomfortable, plus the constant enemy strikes. It is difficult to describe this feeling." (Ibid.)

In the six days of bombing, the Japanese Army also deliberately bombed water and electricity facilities in Chongqing to deepen rear people's suffering. Tang Zong in his diary on June 27 writes that:

Today, the enemy bombed Hualongqiao area for three times. Water and electricity were blown up in the continuous bombing. In the summer without water, there were many difficulties. Now it costs 1.5 Yuan to hire people carrying water. Many people cannot take a bath. (Tang, 1991)

Chen Kewen also in his diary of June 28 confirms that:

The enemy aircraft continued attacking and it has been lasting for five days. People staying in the city really feel a lot of pain. The first concern is the source of food. The price is soaring. There is almost nowhere to buy even if you have the money. The second concern is the lack of drinking water. Although the tap water is not completely cut off, since too much water has been used to put off the fire for days, there is not a drop of water in many places. It is difficult to hire people to carry the river water because of the lack of people. Because there is no water, it is difficult to bathe, wash their face or wash clothes. Under this hot weather, it is even not easy to drink a mouthful of clean boiled water. Many people complained that they have not taken a bath within one week, covered in sweat, unable to wash clothes. (Chen, 2012)

On June 29, the Central University was indiscriminately bombed by the Japanese Army. Jin Yufu's home was destroyed. In his diary on July 1, Jin Yufu writes:

In the past half a month, we have been fighting a drought with hot weather. It is unbearable. However, every day the enemy comes to attack and that is the most miserable part. There is no water or power in school. People really want to drink and bathe and have to suffer. Yesterday it rained. It cools down a little bit. However, since the house was destroyed and it leaks, there is no place to stay. My house was destroyed and not all the furniture was brought out. With such heavy rain, the situation is tougher. This really is disastrous. (Jin, 1993)

In the diary of July 10, Chenke Wen describes the horrible situation in Chongqing without water and electricity after the bombing: "No lights in the city. Where we go it is almost all in ruin. The bustling city has become a desolate tomb." (Chen, 2012)

CONCLUSION

In the 1940 fatigue bombing, although the city of Chongqing has been scorched, it did not shake the

confidence of the National Government to persist in the Anti-Japanese War. On June 30, Chongqing Interim Politics Meeting denounced the Japanese atrocities and expressed the determination of anti-Japanese war:

Japan relies on its warlord violence, urging a large number of Air Force to attack the rear city...the purpose of our enemy is to destroy the will of our people and threaten our third-country diplomats and nationals not to reside in China, to achieve the dream of the enemy to solely dominate East Asia. We are here warning the Japanese warlords, this attempt will absolutely not be reached. Chongqing people are hateful of the atrocities of Japanese military aircraft. Under such brutal bombing, our people will not digest this hatred in thousands of years of history. Our seven hundred thousand people in Chongqing have been ready early in the most tragic and painful spirit to accept enemy bombing. We truly believe that sooner or later the enemy warlords will have to repay the bloody debt they bear. Our people should stick to our own jobs, to dedicatedly support the national policy of government's persistence to the war until the final victory of the war. Hope our countrymen try our best and hope international people quickly adopt valid action to aid our country in order to defeat this common enemy of humanity. (Zhou, 1971)

It is clear from the contemporary people's journals that this determination has considerable mass base. On May 29, Chen Kewen in his diary even writes about the sneak in during the bombing:

For days of avoidance of alerts, it is really tiring. We need some exciting things. After dinner, Zhang Chunming came to my place and then we went to Chen Bingzhang and Zhang Ping's apartment. We played poker until 1 am when we went back. The other day when the enemy flew to attack, three big rocks flew over and they struck there the day before yesterday, when the enemy, I do not know where flying rock three, the broke a big hole in the roof and another hole in the wall. In this broken house, we were entertained for a few hours. This is fun in the life in wartime. (Chen, 2012)

In this attitude, on May 30, Chen Kewen scornfully writes in his diary:

The military spokesman of the enemy said the aircraft would come to bomb Chongqing later every day until the Chinese people lose the spirit of persisting in the war. This is really equal to fart. The enemy can have such a silly spokesman. They truly do not really have people. (Chen, 2012)

Coincidentally, Tang Zong in his diary on July 8 also writes:

Today the enemy aircraft came to attack, mainly casting bombs around the Executive Yuan of National Government. After bomb

alert was lifted, houses around it have already been destroyed and I cannot really work. Therefore, I went to a Barber's in the city. When entering Nanjing Barber Shop, I saw the roof has been broken. All the old furnishings have been destroyed. However, there are several people, facing the side of a small mirror, having their hair cut, with the same spirit. I also have a haircut in this shack, and it feels the same comfortable. (Tang, 1991)

Wang Zizhuang in his diary of August 11 writes that: "In the current situation, even if the enemy could pulverize Chongqing entirely, they cannot really shake the mental spirit of the national persistent anti-war." (Wang, 2001) Japan's Defense Agency has to admit in the history of war series *Navy Combats in China* regarding the significance of *Operation 101*: "As a major combat for more than three months, it indeed caused a great blow to the enemy; however, as an important strategic purpose, there is even no sign for the attempt to have the Chongqing regime yield." (Maeda, 1989)

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