

In Commemoration of China's 15-Year Resistance War

For more writings on Republican China, please check for updates at http://republicanchina.org/Republican_China-pdf.htm

The Air Battle over Shanghai -1932

On the night of January 28th, 1932, Vice Admiral Baron Tomoshige Samejima, chief of staff for Japan's special marines, commanding 1,000 to 2,000 troops and covered by 20 armored vehicles, launched a three-way and five-prong offensive into Zhabei from North Sichuan Road (a road built on the cross-border extraterritory) via the side streets of Bazilu, Qiujianglu and Hengbing-lu (Yokohama Road), with the northern prong against the Shanghai North Station and the Tiantong'an (Through Sky Temple) Train Station, the middle prong to contain China's military force through a westward maneuver from the Japanese elementary school, and the southern prong pushing against the North Station along Qiujiang Road. The Chinese 156th Brigade, and part of the 6th Gendarmerie Regiment which came to relieve the 19th Route Army, hit back at the Japanese and fought the lane-to-lane battles in the narrow streets, and repulsed the Japanese attack before dawn. Cai Tingkai, Jiang Guangnai and Dai Ji walked to the Zhenru train station where they set the interim front command center. In the early morning, the Japanese Yokosuka E1Y Type 14 reconnaissance seaplanes bombed the North Train Station, the Commercial Press, and the Orient Library on the 5th floor of the press [where several tens of thousands of precious classics were housed] and the wider Zhabei area, supporting its ground operations. The Japanese marines took the opportunity to wrestle over the North Station after one hour battle. At 5 pm, the 156th Brigade counterattacked the Japanese to take back the North Station, driving the Japanese away from the railway line, and pressing the Japanese into retreat to east of Sichuan Road and south of Bazi (target) Road. After one night and one day's street battles, the 1st Japanese offensive aborted. On the night of Jan 29th, Japan agreed to a three-day ceasefire through the mediation of British and American consulates. However, the Japanese secretly called over reinforcement consisting of four cruisers and four destroyers from the 2nd destroyer group of Nomura Kichisaburo's Third Fleet. In addition, the Japanese Navy shipped over two aircraft carriers [belonging to the First Navy Air Combat Battle Group], and four naval special landing Daitai, both the carrier and the plane design of which was the product of twenty years of the British-Japanese military alliance.

On January 30th, China appealed to the League of Nations and ministers from the Nine Power Treaty covenant signatory countries for taking effective measures to sternly stop all of Japan's military action in the Chinese territory. At the emergency Central Political Council meeting held in Nanjing, several resolutions were made, including the relocation of the capital to Luoyang as interim capital [where the government stayed till Dec 1st.], the restructuring of the Military Commission to include Chiang Kai-shek, Feng Yuxiang, and Zhang Xueliang and Yan Xishan, with Chiang Kai-shek as generalissimo and Zhang Xueliang, Yan Xishan and Feng Yuxiang as commissars, the authorization for the 19th Route Army to put up a fight in Shanghai, and the mobilization and dispatch of the 87th Division and the 88th Division to the defense of Shanghai. The 19th Route Army, following the public oath of war on the 29th, moved up its 60th Division to Nanxiang and Zhenru from the hind and deployed all units of the 78th Division to the

frontline. At Zhenru, on January 30th, Mme Sun Yat-sen and Heh Xiangning et al led a condolence delegation to visiting the 19th Route Army generals and soldiers.

With the foreign-controlled areas, the International Settlement and the French Concession, packed with Chinese refugees, the British and the Americans first brokered a truce talk inside of Sir J. F. Brenan's British consulate on Jan 31st, with mayor Wu Tiecheng, 78th Division commander Ou Shounian, present. The British proposition was to have the Japanese Army return to the concession territory, the Chinese Army pull back by 2,000 meters while the neutral parties were to take over security in the buffer zone. The Japanese party, knowing their reinforcement was coming in, put off the truce discussion with a claim for reporting to their superiors. French consul general E. Koechlin, on February 1st, requested with the French Tientsin garrison army and the Indochina governor for sending a relief army to Shanghai. The French sent cruiser Waldeck-Rousseau.

On Feb 1st, Chiang Kai-shek, after escorting Wang Ching-wei to Luoyang, hosted the Military Committee meeting at Xuzhou to discuss operational issues as to war with Japan, divided the nation into four defense zones from north to south, with Zhang Xueliang, Chiang himself, Ho Ying-chin and Chen Jitang in charge as commanders, respectively, covering the first defense area (north of the Yellow River), the second defense area (south of the Yellow River and north of the Yangtze River), the third defense area (south of the Yangtze and inclusive of Zhejiang and Fujian) , and the fourth defense area (Guangdong and Guangxi). The meeting decision called for provincial chairmen or commanding generals from the provinces of Sichuan, Hunan, Guizhou, Henan, Jiangxi, Hubei and Shaanxi to contribute fighting force for the general reserved army. For troops in the Nanking-Shanghai region, the 61st Division was ordered to depart for Dachangzhen of Shanghai while Zhang Zhizhong's 87th Division was to take over the defense of Zhenjiang. Yu Jishi's 88th Division was to concentrate in Suzhou area as the reserved army for the 19th Route Army, while allocating one regiment to strengthen the defensive power of Jiangyin fortress. The 1st Artillery Brigade at Kaifeng was ordered to send eight field guns and four heavy artillery pieces to Bengbu and [[Chuxian]], north of the Yangtze, on standby. Having settled the government apparatus and issued the dispatch orders, Chiang Kai-shek returned to Nanking to direct the Shanghai-Wusong Campaign.

On January 31st, Nakajima Type 3 [1928] carrier-based fighter planes and Mitsubishi Type 13 [1924] carrier-borne attack aircrafts from carrier Kaga flew to the Hongqiao Airport airspace in a purported demonstration of force. In early February, the special marine 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Daitai fully assembled in Shanghai. The Japanese first air combat group, which was assigned to the Third Fleet, began to attack Chinese armies and bomb Zhabei, Zhenru and Nanxiang using an airfield built near the Gongda Cotton Factory, in addition to the planes coming from carrier Notoro. Shiozawa Kouichi, for receiving Shimomoto Kumaya's special landing force and Kurume Mixed Ryodan still en route to Shanghai from [[Sasebo]], decided to launch an attack at the Wusong Battery for clearing the Chinese threat and capturing the fortress. On Feb 4th, Shiozawa Kouichi, with the support of 20 aircrafts, directing the special landing, launched an attack at the Wusong Battery, obliterating the garrison dormitories and six fortress guns in the artillery quarters. While fortress commander Deng Zhenquan vacated his post under the Japanese bombardment, soldiers fought on and held their ground. On the 5th, the Military Administration

Board conferred upon Tan Qixiu, deputy 78th Division commander, the post of fortress commander. Tan Qixiu commanded soldiers in defeating the Japanese attack for a second day. By 4 pm, on the 5th, the Japanese, after incurring heavy casualties, pulled back to their original position.

On February 5th, the first air battle between Japan and China broke out above the sky of Kunshan, when Japanese navy planes from the first air combat group, Type 3 planes commanded by Lt. Kidokoro Mohachiro from carrier Hosho and Type 13 planes commanded by Lt. Hirabayashi Nagamoto from carrier Kaga, encountered nine planes from the Chinese airforce 6th and 7th squadrons commanded by 6th squadron deputy commander Huang Yuquan. Huang Yuquan, commanding an airforce with various models such as German Junkers K-47, British Blackburn Lincock III, American Vought O2U Corsair and Corsair variants V-65C, and American Douglas O-2MC bombers, was en route to the Zhenru Airport from Nanking's Mingguogong (Ming Forbidden City) Airport for fetching bombs on a planned mission to bombing Japanese warships outside of the Wusongkou rivermouth. The surprise encounter led to a non-decisive battle without major damages to either party. The air battles raged on for the rest of the day, with two more air battles fought. Hirabayashi Nagamoto, later Japanese flight commander on carrier Agaki, received one shot in the plane, while two Chinese pilots were wounded. Chinese pilot Zhu Daxian, an ethnic Chinese from India, was wounded in the leg during the aerial battle. Huang Yuquan, a Chinese American who returned to China for service in the Chinese airforce in 1926, seeing colleague Zhu Daxian wounded, took over the plane without checking the conditions of the plane and was killed when his Lincock III malfunctioned during takeoff. Near the Zhenru outskirts, Chinese surface-to-air guns shot down one of the Japanese Type 13 planes. Ensuing from the air battle, the Chinese Aviation Agency moved the front base to Suzhou for sake of defense of both Shanghai and Nanking. On the 6th, the Japanese launched the fourth general attack in Zhabei, Baziqiao and Jiangwan area. At the Battle of Shanghai, four Chinese flight squadrons took part in the aerial combat, including the 2nd, 6th and 7th Squadrons, as well as the Cantonese squadron. On the 10th, the Cantonese airforce, to lend support to the Shanghai Battle, sent over six Corsair fighter planes and one Ryan bomber under the command of Ding Jixu.

The Western powers, in the interests of safeguarding their concessions and settlements, renewed the intervention for a second time. On Feb 6th, the Chinese foreign ministry "indicated openness to mediation by the British and American when it requested their efforts to pressure Japan to cease its attack on Wusung in order to ensure international entrance to Shanghai's harbor." On the 7th, British fleet commander Admiral Sir John Kelley, together with British consul, visited TV Soong with a proposal for truce between the Japanese and Chinese armies. The Chinese side agreed to the British efforts and requested assistance for brokering a peace talk with the Japanese, but Vice Foreign Minister Kuo T'ai-chi (Guo Taiqi) and Wellington Koo refused to decouple the Manchuria Incident from the Shanghai Incident. The British fleet commander, together with British consul, visited Soong's residence with a suggestion to localize the Shanghai incident failed when the Japanese declined the Chinese position in solving the Shanghai Incident together with the Manchurian incident at the same time. On the 8th, the Japanese launched a new round of attacks. Heh Yingqin regrettably wired to TV Soong about the loss of opportunity to strike a peace deal over the refusal to decouple the Shanghai incident from the Manchuria

incident. Subsequently, Heh Yingqin sent Wang Jun, commandant for the infantry college of the field army, and Chen Yi, undersecretary of the Military Administration Board, to Shanghai for liaison with chief of staff of the IJA 9th Shidan, who arrived at Shanghai ahead of the troop arrival. In February, the Japanese, after occupying the whole of Manchuria, renamed Manchuria an independent country of "Manchoukuo" with Changchun as the capital and claimed that the Manchoukuo territory would cover Rihe [Jehol] and other parts of Inner Mongolia. In order to successfully launch the puppet Manchukuo, the Japanese government was determined to expand the war in Shanghai to distract the attention of the League of Nations.

On 7th, Nomura Kichisaburo, riding on Matsuno Seizo's flagship Idzumo arrived at Shanghai. To pave the way for the 24th Mixed RyoBrig to land at the Wusongkou rivermouth, Japanese marine units at 9 am attacked the 19th Route Army positions in Yangjiazhai and Caojiaqiao, i.e., the area to the west of the Wusong railway wharf. At 2 pm, the 1st Daitai of the 46th Rentai of the 24th Mixed RyoBrig forcefully landed ashore under the cover of naval barrages; and by 6 pm, took over a beachhead. The Japanese spread out the 24th Mixed RyoBrig, the special landing force, and the Shanghai-stationed marines in the area to the south of the Yuzaobang River and Yunzaobang train station, the Wusong-Shanghai railway line to the east of Jiangwan and Baziqiao, and in the Zhabei area, respectively.

On February 8th, at dawn, the Japanese launched a general attack, with the 24th RyoBrig exerting the bulk of its force to attacking the Wusongzhen town from the Yuzaobang train station, as well as dispatching a small portion of its troops on a roundabout attack towards the hind of the Wusong Battery. The joint Japanese marine and army, "using a pontoon bridge to come around behind the fort from across Wusung Creek", attacked the fort in vain. Meanwhile, the Japanese special landing force attacked Jiangwan and Baziqiao in the attempt of severing the communication between Wusong and Zhabei; and the Shanghai-stationed marines attacked Zhabei, respectively. On the 9th, the 60th Division of the 19th Route Army, after repelling the Japanese the previous day, organized a stealthy raid force to counterattack at the right flank position of the Japanese Shanghai-stationed marines via a roundabout maneuver through Jiangwan. Nomura Kichisaburo trucked over the special landing force to save the marines from being eliminated by the Chinese army. There ensued a lull through the 13th as a result of the Japanese "reluctance to sacrifice more marines until army support arrived." On February 10th, "owners had rushed their racehorses from the Chiangwan race track stables to safety within the Settlement"; however, the Japanese ronin-police attacked the U.S. vice-consul Arthur Ringwalt who accompanied a Chinese-American mother on a return trip to Hongkou District in search of her child, which came to be called the "gravest incident" by secretary of state Henry L. Stimson. Before that, the Japanese intentionally bombed the Wing On cotton mill which was located inside the Settlement and along the Suzhou Creek, and killed six Chinese female workers. At the Wusongkou river mouth, "some thirty-nine Japanese warships and transports passing the forts and, in turn, firing from only a few hundred feet out" ... pulverized the Bellevue Hotel, the waterfront residence of a British official, the new China navy college. "Chinese troops doggedly held onto the promontory at the confluence of the Shanghai ship channel and the Yangtze" ... even though "they had lost the artillery needed to disrupt the traffic of the Japanese transporters."

On the 11th, top “Western diplomats in China, bent on ending the destructive war, traveled from Nanking to Shanghai, where they pressed the belligerents to begin serious talks... The British diplomats in China, especially Sir Miles Lampson, were tireless in cajoling the Chinese and Japanese into negotiations. Secretary of State Stimson and Foreign Minister Sir John Simons had even considered supporting a Japanese request at the League for the termination of China’s anti-Japanese boycott in return for a Japan-backed armistice.” The foreign ministers seemingly had no clue about the Japanese true motive in the Shanghai War, which was to distract the world attention from the launch of the puppet Manchukuo in Manchuria. Under the Anglo-American pressure, “War Minister Ho and Chiang Kai-shek ... would not hand the Japanese any pretext to expand the war from Shanghai. Chinese troops would not be brought across the Yangtze from the north, and the Chinese side would not fire artillery from the Shanghai district of Nanshih (south of the Settlement) against Japan’s base on the Bund.” On February 12th, the two warring sides agreed to “a cease-fire from 8 A.M. to noon ... The fighting halted in order to evacuate, under the Red Cross flags, hundreds of Chinese civilians who had been pinned down within Chapei since January 28.” On this day, the Japanese and Chinese diplomats continued the discussions via the British, American and French counterparts, while Wang Jun held separate talk with Tashiro. Purportedly, Shigemitsu made three demands including the point “that foreign and Chinese police patrol a neutral zone extending twenty kilometers from Shanghai” while “Tashiro rejected the request to allow Chinese police to take over a buffer zone.” Heh Yingqin authorized Wang Jun and Chen Yi to talk to Tashiro Kanichiro direct in the hope of wrapping up a settlement on basis of battleground victories so far.

On the 14th, the Chinese foreign ministry raised the third serious protest with the British and American ministers to China on the matter of allowing the Japanese to land ashore using the wharfs of the International Settlement. On the 15th, the Japanese Army on trucks shot at the shops on the street of Nanking Road.

Meanwhile, on the Chinese side, Chen Mingshu, the Nanking-Shanghai garrison commander, instructed Jiang Guangnai as to the importance of continuing resistance. Jiang Guangnai wired to Heh Yingqin for reinforcement and planes. Chiang Kai-shek “conceded to War Minister Ho’s call to move more Fifth Army regiments towards Shanghai.” On February 14th officially ordered commander Zhang Zhizhong into the Shanghai battles under the numbering of the 5th Corps that consisted of the 87th Division and the 88th Division. In addition to the 5th Corps, special army units, including the model army from the central teaching corps under the Central Military Academy, the mountain gun battalion of the independent artillery regiment under the artillery school, and mining and railway units under the Military Administration Board [[junzhenbu]] were sent to the front to be under 19th Route Army’s command and in the 19th Route Army’s order of battle.

Hollington Tong, who had Tillman Durdin and Harold Isaacs cover the Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai, strictly observed Chiang Kai-shek’s secret order in giving credit to the 19th Route Army and did not disclose the truth till after Cai Tingkai launched the aborted Fujian Chinese Republic in late 1933.

Wang Geng's taxation police force was built on top of Lian Yuwen's Cantonese 16th Division which was part of Li Fulin's NRA 5th Corps, a division that took part in the 1927 Northern Expedition. In Nanking-Shanghai area, deputy divisional commander Wang Ruozhou privately accepted TV Soong's financial incentives to allow the army to be adapted to the gabelle army in the same fashion as the anti-smuggling Salt Revenue Guard battalions that were subordinate to the Finance Ministry and funded by the British-controlled Maritime Customs and Salt Gabelle and Posts during the Peking government time period. First brigade equivalent commander being Feng Yipei, the well-equipped army was called the Soong Family Army. Originally, the Salt Revenue Guards had three regiments, with one regiment loaned for the military campaign in Jiangxi, and the rest two regiments deployed to the Huai River. TV Soong, ambitious in early years, often called Chiang Kai-shek, i.e., his brother-in-law, by "harsh epithets." Numbering about 30,000 troops, the Salt Revenue Guards were equipped with imported weapons and commanded by officers with military training in the U.S. One such succeeding commanding officer would be Wang Geng, a graduate of the West Point Military Academy. When the French Concession of Shanghai encroached upon China's territory with its cross-border road-building and house construction, the Chinese government, through negotiations with the French, deployed the anti-smuggling taxation police army in the disputed extraterritory and settlement area. Hence, the revenue guards fought along their Cantonese natives at the Battle of Shanghai. Before the war, the 1st Taxation Regiment stationed at Xujiahui, the 2nd Regiment Nanxiang, the 3rd Regiment Zhabei, and the 4th Regiment Pudong.

The Central Teaching Column, a model army trained by German military advisors, originated from the Teaching Division of the Central Military Academy, a successor to the Whampoa Military Academy. Dating back to 1927, the Central Military Academy hired German instructors to teach the Chinese officers on modern military operations, with the first head of the Germany Military Mission being Max Hermann Bauer. The Central Military Academy, with Zhang Zhizhong in charge as education director and Chiang Kai-shek as nominal commandant, expanded its model army two divisions. When the 1st Teaching Division merged with the Guard Division, the German military advisers followed the teaching division to the Guard Division. At the Central Military Academy, in 1931, the remaining students were renamed to the General Central Teaching Column, i.e., the central teaching corps, commanded by Tang Guangji. For the 1932 Shanghai Battle, Zhong Xuedong, a Whampoa 5th Session Cadet and a Guard Regiment platoon officer in 1928, tacked on the post as acting commander of the central teaching corps which was put under the jurisdiction of the 88th Division. Zhong Xuedong, while later in 1948 inspecting on the army at the Tientsin front during the civil war, received authorization to fake a defection with Fu Zuoyi's army to the communist camp, was released to hometown in 1950 after communist reeducation, subsequently in 1955 rebelled against the communist rule by launching a guerrilla army to occupy Dongshandao Island, and was killed by the communists as a reactionary after the uprising was crushed. Feng Yipei, when the Guard Division of the national government was expanded to an army corps with two divisions in 1931, tacked on the commander post. The Guard Division was originally built on the Guard Regiment which was organized by Jiang Dingwen on basis of several thousands of wounded soldiers from different NRA army corps ensuing from the 1926 Battle of Nanchang. Chiang Kai-shek gave those wounded soldiers a choice to go home or serve the nation after he heard about the complaint from wounded soldiers who harassed Nanchang residents and merchants over lack of care and

compensation. When Chiang Kai-shek stepped down in December 1931, the 1st Guard Division and the 2nd Guard Division were renumbered by the Cantonese-dominated Nanking government as the 87th Division and the 88th Division.

On Feb 16th, 12 council members of the League of Nations sent Japan a memorandum in regards to respect for member state's territorial integrity. By 9 am on February 18th, the Japanese completed their troop disposition for the reinforcements as well as sounded out the weak points of the Chinese defense line via brief excursions and artillery barrages. On the 18th, Ueda Kenkichi, through British minister-envoy Lampson, authorized a meeting between chief of staff Tashiro Kanichiro and Fan Qiwu, representative of the 19th Route Army, at the Sino-Japanese liaison society inside of the French concession. The Japanese issued a demand to have the Chinese troops evacuate from Shanghai, which Fan Qiwu declined. In the afternoon, Ueda and Murai delivered a five-point ultimatum to the 19th Route Army and the Shanghai municipality. The 19th Route Army's artillery blasted at Japanese positions as a show of defiance. On the 20th, the [[Administrative Council]] of the League accepted the Chinese request to put the Sino-Japanese conflicts on the agenda for discussions by the assembly. Privately, some of the Anglo-American, thinking that China should be hindered from reclaiming the lost territories and sovereignty, thought Japan's invasion of China should be a 'GOOD' lesson to be taught to the KMT - nationalists.

On Feb 20th, at 7:30 am, Ueda Kenkichi, from his command center at the First Gongda Cotton Mill, ordered a diversionary attack at Zhabei-Baziqiao with about eight Daitai from the special landing force and Shanghai-based marines plus a mountain gun Chutai, as well as the two-prong general attack at Jiangwan and Miaohang by the 6th RyoBrig of the 9th SquDiv and the 24th Mixed RyoBrig. The third battle fleet destroyers, plus two destroyers, were sent against the Sizilin (lion forest) Battery and the Liuhe river mouth; the first torpedo group and the Notoro seaplane carrier was to continue bombardment to suppress the Wusong Fortress; and the rest of the Japanese fleet in the Huangpu River was to focus their guns on the Chinese left-flank armies in support of the main field offensive. For the Japanese planes, the aircraft carrier-based planes were ordered attack the Chinese airforce and disrupt the transportation, while the land-based planes were to directly support the Japanese ground forces in combat. At Jiangwan, the 6th RyoBrig of the 9th SquDiv failed to make any headway under the support of tanks and artillery. Chinese soldiers, taking cover under the artillery shelling, rose up to repel the Japanese with grenades and melees fighting. At night, the Japanese sent the 2nd Daitai of the 7th Rentai to attacking Yanjiaqiao, to the north of Jiangwan. At the Battle of Yanjiaqiao, the 19th Route Army destroyed almost the whole Japanese Daitai and captured its commander. The Japanese ceased attacks at Jiangwan after suffering another defeat on the 21st. At Miaohang, the 24th Mixed RyoBrig launched the main offensive at 7:30 am on the 20th, continued attacks through the night, and failed to breach 88th Division's positions after two days' battles.

On February 19th, U.S. Reserve 2nd Lieutenant Robert McCawley Short, a salesman for the Boeing contractor L.E. Gale and acting as an advisor to the Chinese airforce, flew an experimental fighter plane, the Boeing XP925A (later modified to P218), to Nanking from the Hongqiao Airport after the plane was quickly set up and armed for delivery to the Chinese government as a test ship. Near the Nanxiangzhen town, Short ran into a flight of three Japanese

fighter planes. Taking advantage of the speed of the Boeing plane, Short engaged with and rendered damages to the Japanese planes. Since Short seriously damaged the Japanese commanding plane, also shot the wing place and broke off the Japanese plane formation, he was mistakenly attributed in later posthumous commemoration to shooting down the Japanese commanding flyer, Lt. Kidokoro Mohachiro who was the later Japanese 281st Flight Group commander to die at the 1944 Battle of Kwajalein Atoll, part of the Marshall Islands chain. On February 22nd, 1932, the Chinese airforce made a decision to move the planes to Hangzhou from Nanking. Short, whose Boeing plane, numbered X66W and painted green, was too fast to join the formation, flew alone. While above the sky of Suzhou, Short noticed Japanese planes which were aiming to bomb a refugee train at the Suzhou train station. Short single-handedly attacked the formation of six Japanese naval aircrafts from Kaga, which included Lt. Kotani Susumu's three Type 13 [Mitsubishi] bomber planes (B1M) and Ikuta Nogiji's three Type 3 [Nakajima] fighter planes (A1N2)). Short, despite having Japanese fighter planes on his tail, pressed on to attack the three-seat bombers via repeating pull-up and dive maneuver, killing bomber flight commander Lt. Kotani Susumu. In the subsequent low altitude combat, Ikuta Nogiji, Japanese fighter plane commander, together with two other assistants Kuroiwa Toshio and Takeo Kazuo, shot down the Boeing plane in flames above the sky to the southeast of Suzhou.

Posthumously, the Republic of China raised Short to the rank of colonel in the Chinese Air Service. Chiang Kwang-nai, Tsai Ting-kai and Tai Chi, i.e., 19th Route commanders, wrote to Elizabeth Short in Tacoma, Washington, piling praises on her son using the Victorian English as mastered by Chinese returnee students from America: "The best words of condolence are insufficient to express to you our sorrow and sympathy in this bereavement of yours. But we can at least assure you this: No parents could have a more heroic son than Robert who gave up his own life those others might live. He dared Might and died to defend Right for humanity and civilization. To say that he was fighting for China alone would be belittling his gallant and humanitarian deed, because it is for humanity and justice that he died. The name of Robert Short will live long in the scroll of honor of great men, and his meritorious service will ever be in the memory of all Chinese." One month later, in April, China gave Short a state funeral attended by half a million Shanghai people, with T. V. Soong speaking on behalf of the Chinese Government and stating that "Robert Short, a friend from a distant land, flew out of the sky and gave his life . . . to the Chinese people this act of courage and sacrifice was electrifying." Lu Xun, the communist mouthpiece who was hiding in Japan's concession territory and drinking wine in the company of Japanese sing-song women, later on February 5th, 1933, used alias Heh Jiagan to write for the Shenbao Newspaper a sarcastic article of accusation in blaming the Chinese government for let Robert Short fly stranded, termed "Three Wishes for the National Salvation via Aviation", an article collected under compilation "On the Fake Freedom". The air combat caused the Japanese air force to demand manufacturers to improve the flying speed of its planes as well as to have a false conclusion that fighter planes were of no use to cover bomber planes, which led to its debacle in the initial phase of the 1937 air battles over the Yangtze Delta.

On February 23rd, the Japanese sent nine planes to attacking the Suzhou Airport and three planes to attacking the Hongqiao Airport. On the 25th, the Chinese airforce command made a decision to concentrate planes, including newly-purchased German Junkers K-47 planes, into the Jianqiao Airport for a mission to bomb the Japanese aircraft carriers. The Japanese recalled planes to

carriers from the Gongda Airport and sailed carriers to the Ma'an Islands. Having learnt that the Chinese planes had transferred to the Jianqiao Airport in Hangzhou, the Japanese organized another raid under the purported command of Odawara Toshihiko. At 5 am., on the 26th, 13 Type 13 planes from Kaga and 6 Type 3 planes from Hosho started the long distance flight. On the Chinese side, on the 25th, aviation agency director Huang Bingheng, having received report of losing detection of the Japanese aircraft carriers at the Yangtze River mouth, decided to relocate planes to the Bengbu Airport in Anhui Province. Shi Bangfan, who personally carried the earlier attack order to Hangzhou from Nanking, suggested to Huang Bingheng to move planes to the nearby Qiaosi Airport overnight, a stripe of grass land along the Qiantangjiang River. On the morning of the 26th, Shi Bangfan and Zhao Puming, upon seeing dots of the Japanese planes in the faraway sky, immediately took off from the Jianqiao Airport to divert the attention of the Japanese planes. With a ratio of 2 against 19, the two fended off the Japanese assault by maneuvering to disperse the Japanese flight formation so as to cover the other Chinese pilots in warming up the engine for takeoff. During the battle, Shi Bangfan, who was commander for the 2nd Flight Squadron, was hit by a dum dum bullet in the left arm, evaded the Japanese planes strenuously after the barrel of his plane's hind machinegun was blocked by clogged bullets and had to land his Junkers K-47 in a rice paddy field to save gunner Shen Yanshi who forgot to bring a parachute. Upon landing, Shen Yanshi pulled Shi Bangfan out of the cockpit and hit under the body of the plane to evade the bullets from the Japanese planes. Shi Bangfan, who was to lose his arm, carried the southern minority surname of Shi, was a graduate of Baoding Aviation School, and enjoyed the name of "one arm general". Zhao Puming, taking off on the Corsair V-92C, was hit in the chest and the neck and managed to land the plane with damaged wings at the Qiaosi Airport. Zhao Puming passed away three weeks later, with his given name to be the new designation for the Qiaosi Airport.

On the ground at Jianqiao, the Japanese destroyed six coach planes and the aviation school buildings. However, the Japanese planes missed the opportunity to attack the nearby Qiaosi Airport. About two Japanese planes received hits in the water tanks, with one plane making emergency landing off the coast of the Qiantangjiang River and later self-sunk to avoid capture by the Chinese. Cantonese squadron commander Ding Jixu, with his plane under repair, took off by grabbing a plane that belonged to an aviation school pilot. With Chinese planes taking off, Japanese planes retreated over lack of fuel consumed over the 240 kilometer flight. In comment on the Jianqiao Air Battle, Lu Xun, one year later, claimed that he heard that the Cantonese air force, with traditional family girls embroidering the war oath on their suits, was never heard to have arrived at the battlefield up to then, i.e., one year after the war, and made three sarcastic admonishments, including i) pilots should know their path better (i.e., no following the example of Robert Short to go astray), ii) pilots should fly faster; and iii) pilots should not slaughter the people (i.e, no participation in the civil war against the Red Army).

Ah Xiang (webmaster@republicanchina.org)

Modified on December 18th, 2011