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# Japanese Devils and American Wolves: Chinese Communist Songs from the War of Liberation and the Korean War

Adam Cathcart

*This article analyzes anti-American songs from China's protean mobilization for the Korean War. After constructing the historical context of Maoist attitudes toward music and exploring Japan's role as an idée fixe for Chinese song, the article arrives at the Korean War via an analysis of song tunes and texts from the Chinese home front in 1950, emphasizing the role of wolf and devil imagery in anti-American song propaganda. From student amateurs to the conservatory administrator Ma Ke, song composers under communist rule used music and lyrics to drape China's new American enemies in the garb of past Japanese foes, suggesting that Chinese songs from the Korean War extend beyond buoyant patriotism, evoking past traumas and prefiguring the animistic fury of the Cultural Revolution.*

War manifests itself sonically on the home front: Sirens cry, radios broadcast hymns of resistance, and the nation is consecrated in song. Armed conflicts elicit songs decrying the nation's foreign foes as demons, pure devils juxtaposed against the noble and nativist qualities of the state at war. Given the ethos of siege, war offers the state the opportunity to steer cultural production, rendering music a useful adjunct in the quest for unity. Foreign threats depicted in music serve to shore up national loyalty and glorify the potential sacrifice of one's life for the cause (Iritani; Prieberg; Sachs).

In 1950, the eruption of the Korean War elicited an outpouring of songs sponsored by the Chinese Communist Party and its chairman, Mao Zedong. For China's new rulers, the songs composed for the "Resist America Aid Korea" campaign, like the war itself, served as a tremendous nationalistic rallying cry (Cathcart; J. Chang; Gao; Rogaski). Korean War songs mingled with those of the recent past: the song culture in 1950 celebrated the recent birth of the People's Republic in 1949, and it also embraced ardent tunes evoking China's war with Japan (1937–45). Korean War mobilization, accordingly, emphasized the need to safeguard the new nation while using musical and visual tropes from the war with Japan to justify military action. While the musical

products of China's war mobilization remain worthy of consideration as integral elements in the construction of national identity, these songs also exemplify music's unique ability to evoke historical traumas in order to stimulate anger against a new foe. This article thus analyzes China's fierce anti-Americanism during the Korean War, and examines the Chinese image of the United States as gauged through songs. The songs allow us better to assess music's vital role in constructing Chinese nationalism, to enrich the historical view of China's intervention in the Korean War, and to explore the notion of war memory as expressed in song.

### Musical Mobilization in the PRC

Although the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) dismissed China's deep cultural heritage as mere "feudalism," the Party inevitably drew from ancient precedents. In the field of music, the CCP borrowed liberally from musical concepts originally touted by Confucius, whose concepts of music were suffused with political ritual (Cheng). Like Confucius, Mao Zedong and his CCP presupposed intimate bonds between ideology and musical practices. But the CCP surpassed even Confucius's belief that music had a formative effect on moral behavior, asserting that music was crucial to the creation of a class-conscious revolutionary individual. The CCP thus mirrored the theories of Martin Luther and Thomas Muntzer by using music to stir zeal for revolution among a primarily illiterate population (Edwards; Scribner). Here the communists also resembled the Western missionaries who had flooded into China in the wake of the Opium War. Opening up China simultaneously to narcotics and Christ, the missionaries also imported a brand of musical practice which the communists directly emulated. Songbooks in number notation and the promotion of public singing around a common theme were both practices that had been pioneered by Christians in China (DeJaegher and Kuhn). In 1950, one of a dwindling number of missionaries in Henan Province wrote home to his family in Ohio, illustrating the importance of music to the communist program:

About the middle of July [1950], between 20,000 and 30,000 students were brought into the city and it surely has been a noisy place ever since. They were brought here to reeducate them [*sic*]. The most popular way is to put a great deal into song and we have singing on all sides from daylight until dark. Their day begins with daylight. The buglers get out on the mountains and they bugle for an hour or more and that wakes up the whole city. Those who do not bugle sing or drill—"One—two—three—four." This sort of thing goes on all day long around us. (Smith, letter of 24 Sept. 1949; see also Peck)

Mao had himself met with missionaries in his years at Yen-an, and had used their methods of instruction earlier as a music teacher (Shanahan; Spence 9). Thus it is not surprising to see that, as Mao's leadership role expanded outward from Party leader to national leader, he emulated missionary musical techniques.

The Chinese communists were not alone in their attachment to Confucian concepts of music and morality. Mao's rival party, the Guomindang, had brought music into

school curricula since the 1910s as a means of inculcating students with the precious commodity of patriotism (Harrison). Even as they provoked a tidal wave of Chinese nationalism, the Japanese occupiers of Northeast China had refined musical indoctrination in their colonies to such extent that mass gymnastics and eurhythmic exercises had been led by centralized radio broadcasts (Iritani). Like missionary techniques, Japanese methods would be directly appropriated by the CCP, and Chinese military musicologists would further find extensive thematic links between Japanese military music and Chinese patriotic song (Shi). To exercise cultural dominance over China's vast countryside, home to 80% of the country's population, would be the task of communist propagandists (Sun and Cao; Chang T.H.).

To succeed in the rural interior, the communists infused the song medium into new settings (Ma Junshan). Dramatists used songs to enhance the action in their plays, the best known of which was the tear-jerking melodrama *The White Haired Girl* (Guo; Kissinger; Zhang, Guan and Wang). Songs were extended into public celebrations and military activities (Feng; Zeng). The War of Anti-Japanese Resistance, spanning eight bloody years from 1937 to 1945, had seen the greatest expansion ever of militant song culture into the population (J. Chang). The great corpus of Second World War songs indicated the thoroughly pervasive militarization undergone by wartime Chinese society (Liu). With the introduction of radio and loudspeakers, music began to serve an even more important role in the shaping of Chinese society (Kraus).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Chinese communists railed against American "cultural imperialism" from rural redoubts and via underground urban networks (Wang). The communists focused on bad behavior by US troops in China's cities, but they also sprinkled propaganda accounts with unsubtle references to the insidious forces of jazz and dance halls, areas seen as reflective of Western dominance (Melvin and Cai; Mittler). The CCP reinforced the alleged toxicity of Western music via propaganda cartoons that juxtaposed ugly, drunken, and lecherous Americans with jazz and dance halls. These portrayals were not merely coincidental: from 1945 to 1949, the CCP also competed with a profusion of popular songs spun on phonograph records by China's urban elites in cities like Shanghai (Jones). The CCP understood that wars were won in movie houses and in concert halls, not simply upon the battlefield.

While the United States may have been losing the "cultural cold war" in China after 1945, neighboring Japan, now occupied by the US Eighth Army and General Douglas MacArthur, had become an area of American cultural dominance. From the Chinese perspective, the US occupation of Japan represented something far more sinister than a conjugal encounter between dominant Americans and pliant Japanese: the deep scars of Japan's Second World War depredations still ran deep in China, and Chinese society appeared to widely share fears of a Japanese revival. The floodgates of postwar Japan had been opened to US popular culture, but it was the relatively rapid reinvigoration of Japan's economy and the incomplete dissolution of Japan's armed forces that drew the most criticism from China. In spring 1948, the United States embarked upon a "reverse course" whereby Japan's demilitarization was essentially

halted in the interests of creating in Japan a stable, strong, and US-oriented bulwark against communist influence in Asia.

In Beijing in 1948, students conveyed their opposition to American policy in Japan by chalking freshly composed songs in public areas and teaching the music to curious pedestrians (Luo). The lyrics of one song by the Beijing students illustrate the depth of Chinese frustrations with the aftermath of Japan's defeat:

The enemy we cannot exist together with is Japan,  
 She is more ferocious than the East Hill tiger . . .  
 The world of today has changed,  
 America helps our Japanese enemy.  
 Building battleships, training troops,  
 Rearing the tiger to devour men again.  
 Fellow countrymen! Reflect carefully!  
 If the devils rise again, we will encounter disaster.  
 American support of Japan is hateful,  
 We must quickly rise up together in opposition.<sup>1</sup>

The lyrics are angry, aggrieved, and action-oriented—vintage products of student angst. The notion of Japan strengthening while China embroiled itself in civil war was clearly both discouraging and intolerable to Chinese student composers. The song's portrayal of Japan as the "East Hill tiger" evokes the Chinese folk hero Wu Song, whose victory over a seemingly dominant promontory tiger on East Hill had been enabled by his drunkenness and consequent lack of fear. By evoking Wu Song, the students by extension implied that reason and caution alone would not save China—linking themselves thereby to the waves of student emotionalism that rocked China after the May Fourth movement (1919) and, though it was yet to occur, the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). The appearance of archetypes such as tigers in Chinese student songs of the early Cold War heralded the substitution of one ferocious enemy, the Japanese "tigers," for another, the "American wolves." Such lyrics testify that the animistic and vulgar aspects of Red Guards' songs during the Cultural Revolution have their roots at least partially in children's songs of the 1950s (Wagner).

As China's pro-Western government collapsed and fled to Taiwan in 1949, American troops slowly filed back to outlying bases in South Korea or Japan. As they left the ports and the "jeep girls" behind, American forces smashed thousands of US phonograph records in one of the more senseless surrenders of the cultural cold war in Asia.<sup>2</sup> This curious desire to deprive the Chinese communists of access to English-language materials ironically facilitated China's Sovietization, as Russian-language materials rushed in to fill the void in the areas of film, music, sciences, and the arts. By 1950, the previously open flow of US culture into Chinese cities had been constricted to a few isolated American consulates and a handful of flickering movie houses in Shanghai (Wilson). Meanwhile, conservatories of music began to be reformed with heavy reliance on Soviet models and advisors.

In place of fox trots and jazz, the communists promoted a rural infusion into all of the arts. Mao had spent the greater part of two decades in the isolated and arid caves

of the north west promoting the political necessities of the arts (Mao *Literature and Art*). After “liberating” Chinese cities in 1949 (that is, after successfully besieging them), Mao’s communists presided over the dismantling of the Western entertainment industry. In the place of Western dance halls, “people’s cultural halls” engaged the masses with wholesome Marxist fare. The cosmopolitan culture that had characterized upper-class life in cities like Nanjing and Tianjin under the previous regimes constituted a “sugar-coated” threat that needed to be neutralized. The solution offered—a tactic which became staggeringly familiar in China—was one in which intellectuals were supposed to learn from the farmers and students, spending their time absorbing Marx and praising the genius of Chairman Mao. Songs, as they had in the revolutionary base in Yan’an, played a very prominent role in this movement.

Songs printed in newspapers were written in number notation, facilitating rapid and space-efficient dissemination. With the growth of mass communication, radio broadcasts became collective events. The Party mandated “listening groups” in which cadres supervised discussion, partook in the singing of songs as one national body, and added local flavor to the Party’s broadcast directives. Most importantly, songs also reached into classrooms, which allowed teachers to contextualize messages (U). Newly centralized curricula required in 1950 that teachers “should ensure that children understand the meaning of songs very well,” and should aid students in their understanding of “the unity between [musical] emotion and the text” (qtd in S. Ma 95). At the same time, Mao did not trust the teachers entirely in the early years of the PRC, as many of the qualified teachers had taught under the aegis of the old regime and were thus suspect. Perhaps the regime’s music curriculum had this in mind when it argued in 1956 that “the methodology of singing instruction utilizes musical images, and not the teacher’s lecturing, to educate children” (qtd in S. Ma 101).

Students and teachers became enmeshed in a culture of militancy whose musical expression was explicit. The lyrics to a “teacher’s song,” published in the *People’s Daily* not long after the founding of the PRC, testify to the change:

We are China’s teachers,  
Soldiers teaching China’s new youth,  
We are Chairman Mao’s cultural soldiers,  
Bringing the country forward to a new dawn. (*People’s Daily* 6 Apr. 1950)

Mao’s personality cult was taking root in song culture. All Chinese children were, for example, supposed to recognize the benevolence of Mao by age 4. This socialization encouraged within song culture was, thanks to remarkable central control, coordinated also in the powerful media of graphic propaganda (Chen; Hu; Ridley, Goodwin and Doolin).

In 1949, Mao’s fondness for militant music was manifested again in his personal choice for China’s national anthem. On 30 September 1949—the day before his famous declaration of the People’s Republic of China looking out over Tiananmen—

Mao assembled a group of leading artists and musicians in the imperial compound to discuss problems of symbolism. Swift victory in the revolution had left the communists unprepared to offer a national anthem or flag design that appropriately represented China's unity (Mao *Mao Zedong Nianpu* III, 579). Tellingly, Mao began the meeting with a discussion dismissing the communist "Internationale" as a potential national anthem. Mao recognized that there were limits to Socialist fraternity, and the anthem was one. Instead, Mao endorsed Nie Er's "Song of the Volunteers," a popular hit from the War of Anti-Japanese Resistance (1937–45). Within this tune and its evocations of "seas of blood" and exhortations to "build a new Great Wall" were embedded the symbols of Chinese resistance and national identity (Waldron). Mao was particularly drawn to the song exhortation to the Chinese to "stand up," and Mao would in fact paraphrase the song lyrics in his speech the next day. Finally, although Mao did not admit as much, the "Song of the Volunteers" would make a fine choice of anthem for a revolutionary republic because it encouraged self-sacrifice and associated the CCP with resistance to Japan in north China and areas abutting the Great Wall (Charlton).<sup>3</sup> Although Mao is often justly described as an authoritarian figure, in the process of choosing a national anthem he acknowledged the need to defer to popular nationalism and took great pains to align his CCP with the nation's anti-Japanese mood. Like Kim Il Sung and the Worker's Party in neighboring North Korea, the revolutionary Chinese regime wielded the arts to emphasize its guerrilla origins and to strengthen its legitimacy thereby (Kim).

Ultimately Mao endorsed the "March of the Volunteers" as a means of balancing the pure internationalism of China's other new symbols. Mao had received disturbing security reports on public resistance to the new flag among Chinese intellectuals, who saw in the flag's proletarian red flag a humiliating indication of Mao's subservience to the Soviet Union (Clubb; US Consul General in Mukden).<sup>4</sup> Mao thus used the "March of the Volunteers" to guard himself against charges of internationalism run amok.

Mao may have chosen the song shrewdly, but the "March of the Volunteers" still lacked the grand harmonies and pomp appropriate to a state anthem. A few months after the declaration of the People's Republic, the Central Arts Administration published an advertisement in the *People's Daily*, requesting that interested parties submit harmonies and orchestration for the anthem (*People's Daily* 5, 7 Mar. 1950). The fact that the Party was seeking help in such a public forum for its anthem testifies that in its earliest years the PRC was truly being conceived from the ground up. Overtly anti-foreign music not only accompanied China's first steps as a nation, it would soon be drawn into service by Mao in his struggle against the United States in Korea.

### Beijing Middle School Songs

The North Korean invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 quickly triggered American intervention. President Harry Truman sent the US Eighth Army to the Korean peninsula from occupied Japan, and ordered the US Seventh Fleet to prevent

communist China from invading Taiwan. These two actions not only disturbed Mao and the leadership in Beijing, they inaugurated a massive new upswing in anti-US propaganda wherein the Chinese population was encouraged to reflect upon China's past defeats as motivation for change. Composed under party guidance and propagated by and from the center in Beijing, songbooks for school children are among the most revealing sources for understanding Party goals in the depiction of new China's enemies. Songbooks published simultaneously with the Chinese invasion of North Korea display a dual orientation: the songs encouraged children to look forward to a new day under socialism, but they also forced the child singers to reflect upon Japan's brutal war against China. Educating Chinese children in 1950 about the crimes committed by "the Japanese devils" in prior decades served an important legitimating function in the new People's Republic. Songs about Japanese war crimes also lent urgency to the perceived need to prevent an invasion from China's new enemy, the United States (Chen and Gu).

One booklet published by the Beijing City Student Association and the Beijing City Youth League Committee on the Arts represents the Party's efforts to drill home the awful lessons of the war with Japan. Within the context of a campaign to strip the Americans of their righteous aura and to mobilize Chinese citizens to hate the United States, the booklet emphasizes American culpability in maintaining and augmenting Japan's capacity to re-invade China. One song for students, entitled "Moonlight on the Nine-Dragon Mountain," reveals clearly how the Party transformed the onus of past anti-Japanese experience onto new generations of Chinese youth. The song dwelt on the bitter hardship endured by the CCP to liberate China and the village of Mentouyou from both capitalism and the Japanese.

The moon shines over our Mentougou . . . ah!  
Then the devils come, they rape and kill and burn.  
It is said that people's life is worse than that of pigs slaughtered and eaten by dogs.  
This is the life with no food, with no clothing.  
Able to eat only mixed flour and cold water,  
We passed a bitter time.  
Luckily, the CCP liberated Mentougou, and provided  
labor insurance and a secure life.  
But the American devil will never give up trying to arm little Japan . . .  
Fighting in Korea, destroying the peace,  
Now they again want to oppress us.  
In order to protect our future,  
Our Liberation Army must protect Korea, protect  
world peace!  
Our brother workers are united in great power, working hard to support the front  
line troops,  
working to destroy imperialism completely! <sup>5</sup>

Such vocal music contained additional political value because it could bring about the interaction of younger students with recent graduates who could teach them the songs they had learned during the war with Japan. The onus of the "national humiliation" and

the anger caused by Japanese plunder was transmitted to the next generation in the context of a new war. The above song's reference to the People's Liberation Army indicates that the Chinese communists based their legitimacy in no small measure on their previous war against Japan. However, it is interesting that such musical narratives of victory did not eradicate the student's hatred of "little Japan" (*xiao Riben*) and even emboldened students to sharpen their verbal recollection of Japanese cruelty.

The booklet's lone visual icon, the cover, combines the new China's traditional strength (symbolized by a gate), agrarian ideals, gender equality, and the hope of the youth. The sixty-page volume contains essays exhorting the youth to resist America, poems entitled "Oppose American Rearmament of Japan" and "Hate," opera scenes, and songs.

The compilation's final song is entitled "Take the Gun on the Battlefield," and its two brief verses urge students to volunteer to fight the Americans and their Japanese adjuncts. The song's first line repeats a standard slogan of the period, "Save Our Country, Protect Our Homes" (*wei guo, bao jia*), that existed in tandem with the most ubiquitous slogan of the campaign, "Resist America, Aid Korea." The composer makes an explicit link to Ma Ke's song, citing the title with the identical rhythmic motive. The song text's use of first-person language allows the children to place themselves directly on the metaphorical battlefield:

I take my gun on the battlefield  
 Sino-Korean People's Armies hearts as one  
 Kick away the wolf  
 Japanese devils killing people—who can forget? [*fortissimo*]  
 American robbers' guilt becomes more crazed,  
 I take up the gun . . . .

Sino-Korean People's hearts as one . . .  
 Old hate, new hatred, we won't quickly forget  
 The conspiracy to arm Japan—we won't allow it!<sup>6</sup>

The first three lines' standard formulations give way to an animistic evocation—the nationality is secondary to the foreign "wolf" at the door. The musical ornamentation on the word *lang*, or "wolf," emphasizes its importance in alerting children to the heartless and insatiable character of the American troops massing below the Yalu River. At this mid-point of the song, the climax is reached with a rare volume marking *fortissimo*, or *very loud*, at the moment of supreme accusation: "Japanese devils killing people, who can forget?" The second verse emphasizes the role of memory, implying that the children would not allow US rearmament of Japan, and they eternally remember Japan's aggression in China even if the US forgets. And then the song makes a seamless drop back into the stream of anti-American melody and invective. The formulation, both rhythmic and verbal, of the "American robbers" was drawn from Ma Ke's influential song published in *People's Daily* on 4 December 1950.

Shortly after the Chinese media announced the first major military victory in Korea on 4 December, the Beijing *People's Daily*, the *Dongbei Ribao* (*Northeast Daily*)

and newspapers across China published a supplementary edition celebrating China's full-scale mobilization for the war to "Resist America and Aid Korea." Alongside a poster modeled directly after anti-German art from the Soviet Union, musician Ma Ke published his rousing piece of resistance to the American invaders (see Figure 1).

Ma, an influential composer who would later head the China Central Conservatory of Music, entitled his work "American Robbers, So Worthy of Hate." While the song's title harangued China's present enemy, the composer actually spent a great deal of time summoning up past Japanese atrocities as justification for fighting the United States:

American Robbers, so worthy of hate:  
 For years they enslaved [*qi ya*] our Chinese people  
 And treated our country like their colony,  
 Arrogantly running amok [*hen xing ba dao*]  
 With a human face and an animal's heart.  
 They helped the Japanese devils to invade China and  
 Armed Chiang Kai-shek to massacre the people,  
 They exploited [*zha hui*] our cities and destroyed our villages,  
 Looted much money, and killed so many people:  
 This blood debt has not been cleared.

And today, America again invades Korea,  
 Wants to swallow China, wants to swallow the world.  
 Hey! We cannot tolerate this again! We cannot tolerate this again!  
 We must produce goods, improve national defense,  
 Join the volunteer army,  
 Aid those Korean people, destroy the invaders, and protect peace.



Figure 1 *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), Special "Resist America, Aid Korea" Supplemental Section, 4 Dec. 1950

Hey! We cannot tolerate this again! We cannot tolerate this again!  
 We must produce goods, improve national defense,  
 Join the volunteer army,  
 Aid those Korean people, destroy the invaders, and protect peace.

The composer's formidable formal training makes decoding this song a challenge. Skillfully manipulating rhythm and harmony, Ma fuses China's rising anti-Americanism with a long-simmering anti-Japanese sentiment. Within the song, Ma thrice refers to China's enemies, those being the "Japanese devils," "Chiang Kai-shek," and "American devils," and signifies each with an identical rhythmic motive. The three Chinese syllables for each enemy's name—*Ri ben gui*, *Jiang Jie shi*, *Mei guo gui*—are crisply articulated with three identical notes that hammer away, short-short-long, at the same unchanging pitch. The same simple rhythmic motif pervades many works of the time, perhaps because the simplicity of the motif reflected national music education texts that designated the rhythm as one appropriate for first-graders (S. Ma 80). In the song's second verse, Ma uses the identical rhythmic motif for the words "Not again! Not again!" Rhythmically, the composer thus asserts similarity between the Japanese, Chiang Kai-shek, and the United States, each of whom presumably longs for China's subjugation. The composer raises the specter of past foreign invasions of China, and exhorts his comrades to prevent any Japan-like repetition of a bloody intrusion into China. This phrase, "Not again!," is particularly salient within Chinese Korean War propaganda, as it derives its power completely from the deep scars left by Japan's violent incursions from 1931 to 1945. The four-fold repetition of the phrase indicates that, as depicted in CCP mobilization, the Korean War really had less to do with saving North Korea than it did with China's determination not to be bullied. To the extent that North Korea could aid as a buffer between China and a rearmed Japan, its participation would be welcomed.

To summon up memory, Ma Ke supplemented his rhythmical cues for China's enemies via creative use of harmony. With each repetition of the enemy's name or the "Not again!" mantra, the composer slides into the despairing key of D minor. The recurrence of D minor—a distinctly morose tonality—within a sunny C-major march testifies to the composer's skill at leading his singing audience toward painful memories of the war with Japan. Whether or not the performer is aware, the political message is ingeniously reinforced through musical ciphers: By using harmonic and rhythmic motifs, the song equates America with both Japanese aggression and Nationalist exploitation. Even in this jaunty song, whose stated purpose was "to stimulate enthusiasm," Ma skillfully and subtly dwelt on China's past humiliation. Here music functioned as a weapon to churn up memory of past wars and to instigate action against the new enemy of the state. However, it is quite possible that the song's intent was not entirely manipulative. The song, after all, ends with a cry to "defend peace."

In hindsight, it is easy for Western observers to dismiss communist "peace campaigns" during the early Cold War as merely another fabrication of the burgeoning state propaganda machine. Certainly the anti-communist plays and

songs written in Taiwan in 1950 argued as much (Hunter). However, examination of Ma's song and the experiences of those who sang it require us to conceive of the composer's call to "defend peace" as more than political pabulum. Certainly Ma's work was conceived within the context of a propaganda campaign, and had been judged by the Party as politically useful. This in no way, however, impugns the earnestness of the composer's plea for peace: Like the compositions of Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich, Ma's work satisfied both totalitarian state ambitions and the composer's own desire for renown and stability. The Chinese people shared Ma's weariness with war, having experienced it in its totality for the greater part of a century, and the Chinese Communist Party wisely cultivated support for their intervention in Korea by posing themselves as the defenders of China's fragile domestic tranquility (Gao).

The most prominent and memorable song to emerge out of the Korean War in China was entitled "Crossing the Yalu River." This song remains popular today in China, and even holds a place in elementary and middle-school curricula emphasizing the victorious narrative of the Korean War. Not only is the song known by virtually every Chinese person above 13 years of age, it also represents a rare statement of mass support for North Korea in the PRC. For their part, the North Koreans use the song to remind the Chinese of their common cause in warding off American hegemony, and the issuance of special stamps commemorating Sino-North Korean cooperation in the Korean War serves that end as well.

The song first appeared in a special supplement to the *People's Daily*—the first such supplement distributed after the announcements of China's smashing successful initial intervention. The song captured the upbeat spirit of home-front mobilization while justifying China's military intervention in Korea.

Valiantly, militantly, cross the Yalu River!  
 To protect peace and defend the motherland  
 Is precisely to defend our hometowns!  
 China's good sons and daughters,  
 Of one mind and heart, united tightly,  
 Resist America! Aid Koreans!  
 Defeat America, which has the heart of a wolf!

The lyricist cheerfully evokes the Yalu River, the border between China and North Korea, by employing a child-like rhyme with repeated syllables bordering on nonsense (*xiong jiu jiu, qi ang ang, kua guo Yalu jiang!*). However, analyzing only text in this song would yield only partial understanding, as the music renders dramatic changes to the text. Rhythmic values—the amount of time spent on each syllable of text—and pitch levels determine which words receive primary emphasis. In "Crossing the Yalu River," two words receive special attention: "China" and "oppose America." The two characters that comprise the word "China" (*Zhong guo*) are each held for two long beats, indicating the song's concern with defining the new nation and its anti-American orientation. The nation is further defined via China's "good sons and

daughters” who sing their desire to fight in Korea and to ward off foreign invaders. The two characters for “oppose America” (*kang Mei*), with similarly long note values in terms of pitch and duration, constitute the song’s climax. Melodically, however, “China” ascends a whole step while “oppose America” descends by the same degree. These juxtapositions reinforce that “China” must “oppose America,” imply China’s rise and America’s decline, and expound the xenophobic logic of war (e.g. “To be Chinese, one must oppose America”). The Yalu was also evocative of previous conflicts, and the CCP presented the river as a natural boundary which China, having already fought Japan, would defend at all costs.

Perhaps the most interesting facets of the song are the depictions of China’s North Korean allies. While a number of revolutionary songs celebrated China’s outwardly brotherly relationship with their Korean counterparts, this song acknowledges Kim Il-Sung’s fighters only perfunctorily. After the drawn-out heights of “opposing America,” Chinese singers ran quickly down the scale (“aid the Korean comrades”). Musically, the Koreans were an afterthought to China’s actual purposes in Korea; that is, Korea’s defense was but a means for China to stand up to the United States and to protect the mainland. The song’s emphasis on the American enemy, rather than on the intransigent North Korean ally, is made clear in the final line, which is twice



**Figure 2** “Are You Willing to Let the Fierce Russian Wolf Devour China?” Headquarters Far East Command, Psychological Warfare Section, Secret Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group<sup>7</sup>

repeated: “America has a wolf’s heart, wolf’s heart!” This emphatic portrayal of the United States as a slaving beast left the North Koreans as a secondary consideration to China’s safety. It also meshed with a wide web of similar state rhetoric, and leaves no doubt that America’s lust for Chinese territory can only be met with force. The song’s festive ethos, quick tempo, and childish rhymes could overcome any fear inspired by the depiction of the foreign “wolf.”

American propagandists took notice of the effectiveness of the song’s ebullient call to fight in Korea. Thus, the Psychological Warfare Section of the US Army composed new lyrics for the tune and dropped them in leaflet form over Chinese communist trenches in the Korean mountains. Along with a horrific picture of a wolf now intended to represent “Soviet Russia,” the song enjoined the Chinese soldiers to view their new nation as subjugated “under the bloody Red flag.”

This subjugation, the US song argued, was an aberration which could be changed only if Chinese men agreed that “to protect our families we must wipe out the Russian wolf.” It is unknown how effective this approach was, for a single sheet of paper floating down from the clouds could not possibly have rivaled the sophisticated web of political indoctrination set up for the CCP troops in Korea. Songs such as that shown in Figure 2, however, were better received by Chinese people in prisoner-of-war camps, where rewards for turning one’s ire against the “Red menaces” of Mao and Stalin were tangible.

After the Chinese offensives finally bogged down in spring of 1951, PRC teenagers singing anthems of war may have realized that they themselves might shift from *singing* about crossing the Yalu River to actually *crossing* the Yalu, and proceeding into the devastated and alien landscape of Korea. Indeed, for many volunteers, the romance and ebullience of the song did not cohere with their own experiences, where the Yalu became a veritable River Styx, a black tributary of no return. The Korean War had brought with it a great upswing in patriotism, but the human costs were high. Perhaps the similarities which the government had urged people to perceive between the war in Korea and the previous war with Japan overflowed the boundaries of simple patriotism and extended into the emotions of grief. Korean War songs in the PRC reinforced a new national identity by raising and supposedly expiating China’s historical humiliation, but any discussion of a revival of Japanese militarism was bound to carry the bitterness of the past into what was ostensibly a new era.

## Notes

- [1] US Consulate General in Beijing, “Anti-American Demonstrations and Propaganda.”
- [2] US army officials destroyed 14,000 phonograph records and burned documents in evacuating Nanjing in December 1948, but they managed to bring with them 30,000 cases of beer and General Wedemeyer’s Cadillac. See *Life* (20 Dec. 1949, 32).
- [3] For reference to the Yellow River in another nationalistic song, see “Baowei Huanghe” (141).
- [4] American Consulate General in Mukden to Secretary of State, “May Day Celebration in Mukden,” 17 May 1949, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 59,

- 893.415/5-1749; see also Consul General in Beijing (O. E. Clubb) to Secretary of State, 23 Dec. 1949, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 59, 893.00B/12-2349.
- [5] Qinghua Student Group, “Jiulongshan shang de Yueliang,” song composed for miners at Mentougou (mine near Marco Polo Bridge) (58).
- [6] *Beijingshi Xuesheng Kangmei Yuanchao Wenyi Xuanchuan Zhuanzuo Xuanji* (60).
- [7] “Are You Willing to Let the Fierce Russian Wolf Devour China?” Leaflet and song “Anti-Communism and Resist Russia Song” 9 July 1952, New York Public Library Propaganda Collection, Box 11.

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