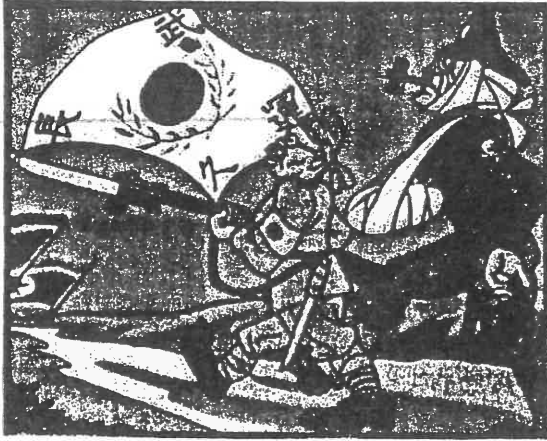


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Cruel Resurrection: Chinese Comics and the Korean War

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Amid the chaos and revolution of the mid-twentieth century, Chinese cartoonists produced a torrent of caricatures, panel cartoons, and comics whose idioms were awash in patriotism as well as xenophobia. Nationalism intensified with the eruption of the Korean War in 1950, precipitating a sharp increase in anti-American as well as anti-Japanese cartoons. Prompted by propaganda handbooks for amateurs, an explosion of comic art ensued in China's factories, schools, army units, farms, and villages, aiding the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the crucial tasks of revolution. The expansion of cartoon mediums confirmed Mao's longstanding conviction of the potency of comic art as a political weapon.

As communist armies swept away the crumbling remnants of the Nationalist government in 1949, cultural propaganda generally, and comic arts in particular, played an important role in consolidating battlefield victories. Festive parades testified to the wholesale cultural transformation that was to come: rural dancers thronged city streets, throats throbbed with mass song, and arms ached from the hoisting of banners and the pasting of wall posters. Tanks of the Communist People's Liberation Army roared underneath city gates adorned with icons of praise for Chairman Mao as well as huge caricatures scorning the "enemies of the people."¹

The most immediate of these "enemies" was Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi], China's longtime head of state, a client of the Truman administration, and Mao's formidable opponent in civil war. Although his political rhetoric was revolutionary, Chiang's cultural traditionalism did not endear him to comic book artists or caricaturists. Chiang's political manifesto, *China's Destiny*, had fallen flat; the spirited character of Communist culture and Mao's emphasis on the visual arts attracted far more cartoonists than did Chiang's fascist-inflected Confucianism. Chiang's economic mismanagement and onerous censorship after World War II further alienated young artists, forcing many to move to Hong Kong. For youth who stayed on in cities like Beijing and Shanghai, desperate conditions called forth political protests. **Figure 1** demonstrates the generational and ideological divides between Chiang and his disaffected urban constituents. Occupying a central position in the panel is a student protester, who, shot by Chiang, falls upon an "anti-hunger" banner. Into his bullhorn, the martyr of the student movement breathes a prophecy with startling socialist overtones: "The government is killing the people, but the bloody poor will stand up!" (*xuehai fanshen zhan qi lai*) The downward

angle of the student's words imputes weight to his statement, or perhaps suggests the impending fall of Chiang's Nationalist government. Although the comic was published after the "liberation" of Tianjin, virtually every one of its 51 panels dwells on the horrors of life under the old regime. Summoning bitterness was part and parcel of the communist approach, and artist Wu Biduan did not shirk from the task.



Figure 1. Wu Biduan, "Accosting the Democratic Student Movement, Resulting in Innumerable Bloody Incidents," *The Guilty Biography of Chiang Kai-shek*, (Tianjin: [July 1949] September 1950).

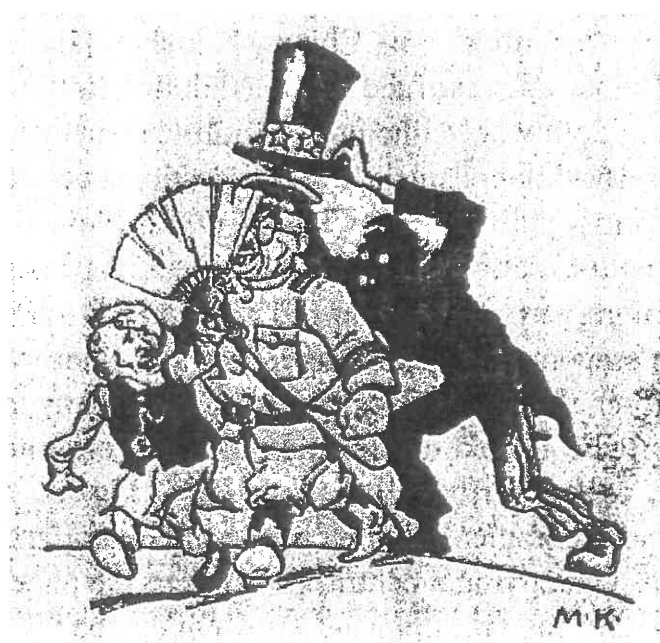


Figure 2. Mi Gu, "Well Armed and Well Supported, Here They Come Again," *Guangming Daily*, Hong Kong, January 1949.

Figure 2 evidences another prominent criticism of Chiang, that of his dependence on the United States. Although assistance from Washington had buoyed Nationalist China in the war against Japan, many Chinese viewed the United States with skepticism after 1945. American military and economic aid to China, they reasoned, only served to line the pockets of Chiang's corrupt administration, deepen national dependency, and expand conflict between the government and the communist insurgents. Equally offensive to Chinese public opinion

was the American occupation of Japan, an occupation regarded by many Chinese as insufficiently punitive (Zhang, 2002:119-146). In **Figure 2**, Mi Gu tapped a limitless reservoir of public cynicism by depicting Chiang and his Japanese military advisor, Yasuji Okamura, as self-deluded pawns of the United States. Mi Gu's portrayal of a Japanese war criminal being shielded by Uncle Sam testified piquantly to Chinese doubts regarding the American occupation. Given the fever pitch of Chinese nationalism in the late 1940s, Chiang's relationship with the Americans and their new Japanese allies was bound to result in serious political fallout. Mi Gu, a prominent voice among communist cartoonists, blamed Chiang for failing to end China's humiliation at the hands of imperialist powers, and depicted his reliance on American aid as an intolerable loss of face.

Chiang and his administration fled to Taiwan in December 1949, leaving flooded rivers, throngs of refugees, and idle printing presses in their wake. The absence of Nationalist power, however, did not translate into immediate communist influence, particularly in areas like Tibet and the opium-rich Southwest. Control over printing presses in the unstable South was slow, and book markets nationwide remained beyond Party control. The CCP, although beset by tremendous material obstacles, was nonetheless laying the groundwork that would ultimately result in the monolithic artistic style of the Cultural Revolution. In the transitional and post-revolutionary period from 1949 to mid-1951, cartoons varied widely in style and execution. **Figure 3**, for example, was part of a frieze of four cartoons that dominated the arts page of the *People's Daily* in late 1950.

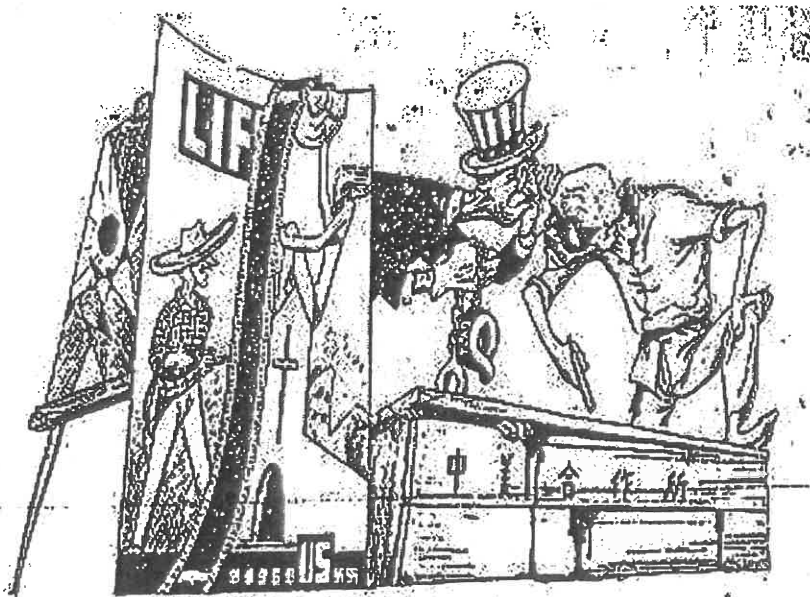


Figure 3. Anonymous, "Sino-American Cooperation," *People's Daily*, Oct. 16, 1950.

In **Figure 3**, Chiang Kai-shek resembles a dangerous street thug, lording over the deadly consequences of "Sino-American Cooperation." The cultural

effluvium of the West -- Hollywood movies, abstract expressionism, and Christianity -- functions as a criticism while betraying the artist's fluency with Western culture. Viewers unfamiliar with American icons such as *Life* magazine, however, could readily grasp the harms of Chiang's collaboration by performing a poem printed adjacent to the cartoon. The invective text, entitled "American Criminal," paints a vile picture of "American imperialism":

Who drinks the blood of the Korean people?
 Who drinks the blood of the Chinese people?
 Who drinks the blood of the world's people?
 Who drinks the American people's own blood?
 Who is it? Who is it? Who is it?
 -- the American imperialist invader!
 American devil! American devil! American devil!

Blunt verbal counterpoint aside, the cartoon was deemed worthy of inclusion in the Communist Party's central organ only due to the fluid state of Chinese cartooning in 1950. Urbane motifs such as those seen in Figure 3 were gradually eased out of the visual lexicon.²

Figure 4, from a centrally published comic entitled "This Is America," provides further evidence of distinctly un-proletarian idioms in Chinese Communist comic art.



Figure 4. Cai Zhenhua, *This Is America*, (Shanghai, 1950).

The figure portrays a brainwashed American college student whose reading list includes "Mein Kampf" and manuals on military invasion. The apparently senseless pairing of Americans with Nazi reading material actually served to fuse together all of China's enemies, past and present: the actual facts of history had little import. Like Figure 3, Cai Zhenhua's fantastic image mixes the swastika and the dollar sign, effectively erasing America's past war with the Nazis. As the American student diligently pores over a volume entitled

“Education: Edited by Wall Street,” a professor loads his cranium with pornography and bombs. More ominously, this grotesque rendering of American higher education also implied that Chinese returning from study in the United States were in need of “thought reform.”

Comic books of all artistic styles would serve an important purpose in building a new revolutionary society. Some, like **Figure 1**, were meant to denounce the evils of the old regime and thereby plainly demarcate the boundary between “new China” and its republican predecessor. Graphic historical reviews of “American imperialism” in China also promoted a dichotomy between the humiliating past and the utopian future. The beacon of that utopia was the friendship between Mao Zedong and Josef Stalin; the modernity brought by the latter’s assistance was the subject of much comic art. Female equality, another major plank in the communist platform, was readily propagandized through comic art. And, showing the rising power of Mao’s cult of personality, many comics (and indeed, mass songs) treated the CCP leadership with grateful hagiography.³



Figure 5. Shen Tongheng, Yu Baishu, *Before and After 1949: A Big Difference*, (Shanghai, 1950).

Modern readers can quickly grasp the scope of comic literature, and what the communists hoped to accomplish through the comic medium, in **Figures 5 and 6**. In characteristically Chinese style, the images are accompanied by verses (Hung 1995). Text and images were intended to convince the people of Shanghai that communist administration brought tangible benefits, not simple class antagonism. The rhyme accompanying **Figure 5** criticizes former reading habits in Shanghai: “Past culture was all pornographic / Good books couldn’t be published / Books were just fit for the garbage / Sensual pictures

ruled the day.” The magazines on the shelf sought to prove the degraded character of the old society: issues included “Western Sex Manual,” “100 Days of Dancing,” “Weirdos,” and, on a cover featuring a made-up female face, “The Experienced Girl Runs Away.”



Figure 6. Shen Tongheng, Yu Baishu, *Before and After 1949: A Big Difference*, (Shanghai, 1950).

According to **Figure 6**, publications in the new China were far more wholesome. Customers in the shop exemplify the new communist morality by standing tall, shorn of shadows, their subversive desires rectified by virtue of study. The feminine allures of the past have been overthrown by publications such as “Shanghai Factories,” “Soviet Cartoons,” “Sino-Soviet Friendship,” and the heavy-industrial “Northeast Pictorial.” Mao’s “New Democracy” replaces the lurid magazine “Chicks.” One magazine cover in **Figure 6** features a noble coal miner, while another shows a dwarf-like Japanese soldier springing out of Uncle Sam’s top hat. As the accompanying rhyme stated, “New books are being published now / At reasonable prices, the content is good / National, scientific, and popular as well / The people’s level of literacy is growing.” Publications were practically free under communist administration, and reading rooms were an ideal locale in which to inculcate the society with new ideals. Chinese Communist comics nearly all preached the benefits of “liberation” or mirrored the government’s portentous claims of imminent danger stemming from the imperialists. Cartoonists rose to the undertaking, placing accent on their own production figures as if culture were a scientific and measurable commodity with which to battle the imperialists. The outbreak of the Korean War, and the rapid escalation of that conflict, confirmed the warnings of the Chinese Communist leadership and sparked a patriotic movement, inspiring cartoonists to create a new wave of anti-foreign, patriotic imagery.

“Resist America and Aid Korea”

Before dawn on June 25, 1950, the North Korean People's Army plowed over the 38th parallel and rolled south towards Seoul. Responding to the assault, U.S. President Harry S Truman ordered the deployment of American troops to South Korea, and, significantly, decreed American protection of an island hungered for by the Chinese Communists: Taiwan. According to Truman, the period of international “communist subversion” had reached an end; the clash of civilizations underway in Korea necessitated that communist expansion be met with force. Despite the strength of Truman's rhetoric, the Americans suffered ten weeks of successive defeats at the hands of North Korean infantry before troops directed by General Douglas MacArthur turned the tide of the war in September 1950. As autumn fell, American troops raced north and bombers unleashed their hellish cargo across the breadth of North Korea.

Beyond the Yalu River in Beijing, Mao Zedong watched these events with growing trepidation. Mao's nation-state was less than a year old, and the United States military, having preserved a sanctuary for Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan, posed an expanding threat to the revolutionary order. Faced with the looming defeat of Korean communism, Mao responded venomously, thrusting more than 300,000 Chinese “volunteers” into the fray and launching an energetic nation-wide mass movement in support of the war.

Popular mobilization on the Chinese home front compelled cartoonists to sharpen their anti-American criticisms. Echoing the Party line, they argued that the Americans were foreign devils whose hollow bravado was best caricatured as a “paper tiger,” that is, one whose fearsome appearance belies inner weakness.



Figure 7. “Pierce the Paper Tiger,” *Anti-Aggression Cartoon Series*, (Shanghai, 1950).

As they set about deflating American arrogance, Chinese cartoonists regarded their work with utmost seriousness; essays on “the artistic battlefield” demanded sharp political caricature for both soldiers at the front and workers at home. Anti-foreign cartoon appeals, as part of the increasingly tightly bound web of persuasive media, were reinforced by study sessions, radio editorials, streams of newspaper articles, and street theater. Within the context of Party sponsorship and a high tide of nationalism, cartoonists' appeals to xenophobia should not be surprising; their recourse to techniques honed during the 1930s is also logical. What is remarkable about the following images, however, is the extent to which Chinese cartoonists dredged up painful images of the Japanese and

applied these images to the United States.

The preeminent symbol of that anti-Japanese strategy sprang from the pen of Zhang Ding. In Figure 8, "Following the Old Road of the Japanese Devils," Zhang pictorially represents the Party line: America was rearming Japan in order to storm the Asian mainland.



Figure 8. Zhang Ding, "MacArthur Is Following the Old Road of the Japanese Devils," *Propaganda Study Materials to Resist America and Aid Korea*, (Beijing: November 1950), front cover.

The striped obelisk representing Asia rears away from the invaders, while black columns of smoke coil around MacArthur's flag in an octopus image redolent of World War II cartoons. The unity of past and present is further manifested in the wind-whipped standard, which mingles design elements of the flags of Japan, the Japanese military, and the United Nations into a single dangerous symbol. Zhang, a staunchly anti-Japanese veteran of China's 1930s' "cartoon brigades," no longer depicted Japan as huge and brutish, but as a diminutive and willing adjutant to American imperialism. Although MacArthur leads the way, the Japanese soldier remains malevolent, his bayonet scabbard dangling as if to remind viewers of past Japanese atrocities such as the rape of Nanking. The American bombers, symbolic of both technological might and wanton cruelty, were likewise an ugly reminder of Japan's past dominance over China. America's anti-Japanese aid to China in the early 1940s, is here but a dim memory, blotted out by war in Korea.

Cartoon Handbooks and Artistic Unity

With its emphasis on American-Japanese collusion, Zhang's cartoon quite literally set the tone for a group of seminal publications known as *Cartoon*

Propaganda Reference Materials. Beginning in November 1950, these short pamphlets were produced by the Central Academy for the Fine Arts and distributed from Beijing to localities across China. The Ministry of Propaganda possessed ultimate authority in the publication of the handbooks. The wide dispersion of the *Reference Materials* stimulated the production of wall posters and local cartoon newspapers and addressed directly the Party's guidance over cartoon imagery. At their most fundamental level, the *Reference Materials* provided source material for new cartoons, which were needed not only in factories and schools, but also as vital components of "spontaneous" demonstrations. As one early analyst of Chinese comics noted, the handbooks were an ample source for China's multiplying bands of cartoonists:

Source material is difficult to obtain, particularly for amateurs, and here [in the handbooks] was a plentiful supply of it for amateur cartoonists and artists, showing the way every important personality should be drawn, in simplified fashion, and showing how every important political issue of the day should be represented pictorially. The Party, with its usual skill in exploiting the indomitable, finer qualities in any people, assumed correctly that once a cartoonist or artist had followed the models shown in the propaganda sketch book, he would be inclined to believe that they were true, and even to argue that they were, for weren't his own creations and honor at stake (Hunter, 1953:213)?

By creating a new canon of rectified imagery, the handbooks delineated the acceptable boundaries for depictions of new heroes and old villains. Among the latter category, the Japanese figured prominently, appearing as bloodthirsty familiars, drunken war criminals, and, most notably, decomposing skeletons into whom the damned Americans were breathing life. Harry Truman, Douglas MacArthur, and invariably plump and belligerent Wall Street bankers also appeared in profusion. The handbooks guided artists to depict China's allies, the North Koreans, as heroic younger brothers; the new flag of the besieged DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) also received special emphasis (Chang, 1997:95-116).

The *Cartoon Propaganda Reference Materials* not only provided basic models and line drawings, but also reprinted recent works of China's leading cartoonists. Mi Gu and Zhang Ding's cartoons gained extensive exposure via the handbooks, and were thus imitated widely. One reprinted cartoon, **Figure 8** by Mi Gu, exemplifies a prominent strand of the larger anti-Japanese strategy backed by the CCP. The huge Japanese corpse serves as a metaphor for Japanese militarism, which, although defeated, remains large enough to be awakened by the swarming connivances of the United States. Truman rifles through old maps at the foot of the coffin, John Foster Dulles combs the rotted mustache, and MacArthur, ever the narcissist, holds up a shaving mirror. Notably, the extreme left of the cartoon reveals an American doctor, who, with the help of a buxom nurse, is attempting to find a biological formula

to resurrect the giant. This oblique reference to American germ warfare augured massive propaganda offensives of 1952, when the communists accused the U.S. of using Japanese chemical weapons to spread disease in Korea and Manchuria.

1950年7月



Figure 9. Mi Gu, "Giving Again the Latest Military Fashions," *Cartoon Propaganda Reference Materials*, (Beijing 1951).

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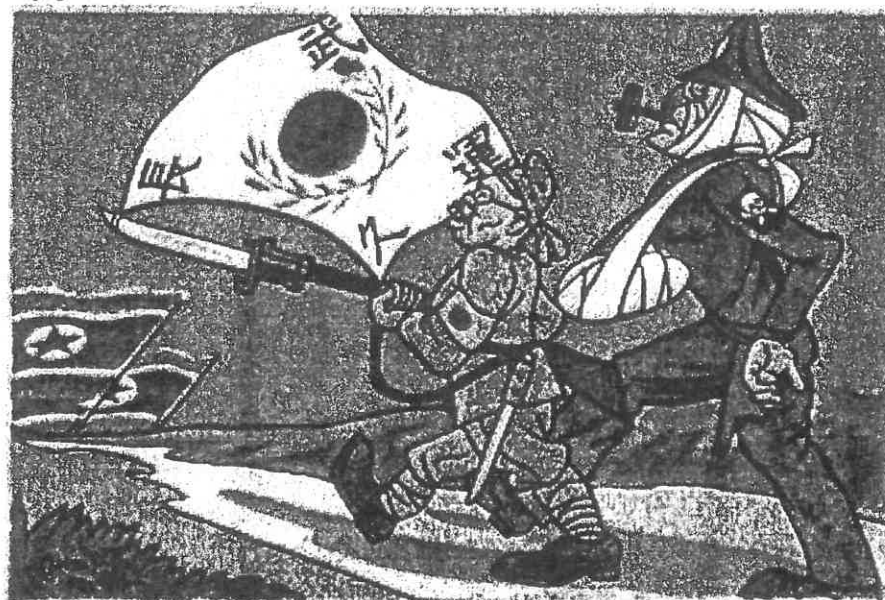
Figure 10. Zhang Ding, "The Ghost of the Japanese Bandits Is Waving at the American Imperialists," *Propaganda Cartoon Reference Materials* #1, (Beijing: November 1950).

Skeletal portraits of Japanese soldiers often featured swords or bombs as phallic symbols, reminders of Japan's literal and figurative rape of China. In Figure 8, the protruding bomb functions as an encoded challenge to the young Chinese men for whom the Korean War was freshly defining the parameters of masculinity (Chen, 1999). The Ministry of Propaganda so believed in the effectiveness of anti-Japanese cartoon themes that the inaugural issue of *Cartoon Propaganda Reference Materials* featured an American soldier stepping across the Yalu River only to encounter the grave of Japanese imperialism (Figure 10). Moreover, the cartoon handbooks magnified immensely the artistic influence of both Mi Gu and Zhang Ding, whose anti-Japanese themes resonated across the mainland.

The wide geographical reach of the *Reference Materials* is reflected directly in a series of postcards published in Hong Kong. Figure 11 reprises directly Zhang's image of a bruised MacArthur actively reinvigorating the Japanese military. The postcard mirrors almost

exactly the composition of Figure 8, but North Korean flags, not American bombers, fill the horizon. However, there is no reference to the dollar sign on MacArthur's arm, indicating that the Hong Kong artist did not view profit in such scathing terms as Zhang Ding.

The antecedent *Propaganda Reference Materials* clearly demonstrate the anti-Japanese thrust of CCP propaganda in the Korean War. Undoubtedly, anti-Japanese sentiment had repeatedly proven its currency, and, because of the ongoing and allegedly soft U.S. occupation, "Japan bashing" remained an ideal tool with which to stir animosity toward the United States. Images of skeletal Japanese soldiers seemed to imply that although Chinese heroism had extinguished Japan's colonial aspirations, the Americans nevertheless wished to visit a terrible sequel upon a war-weary people. This propaganda tactic was a cruel resurrection, a gratuitous play upon the emotions of people who longed to redeem eight years of suffering under Japanese invasion. Wielding the image of Japan substantially eased the way for the Party to mobilize the requisite manpower to wage war against a technologically superior enemy in Korea. Portraying America as the latest demonic manifestation of Japanese imperialism, Chinese cartoonists lent momentum to the outcry for an apparently just war.



9. 魔鬼利用日本，参加美帝侵略的罪恶战争。

Figure 11. Mengzi, "Devil MacArthur Uses Japan to Join in America's Criminal Imperialist War of Invasion in Korea," *Postcards Opposing Imperialist America's Rearmament of Japan*, (Hong Kong, 1950).

"Days of Humiliation"

The problem with the U.S.-as-Japan argument, however, lay in its placement in time. Until the U.S. invaded the mainland, the argument that America was "following the old road of the Japanese devils" would remain

fundamentally retrospective, dwelling upon events long past. In a boon to the CCP, the United States saved the Party from resting its argument entirely upon historical coincidence and opposition to U.S. policy in Japan. Mistakes by American pilots gave the Party crucial validation in its appraisals of the U.S. as “the new Japan.” Almost from the beginning of the war, the Americans had used their air superiority to pound targets in the extreme north of Korea. On August 27, 1950, a lone American F-51 airplane buzzed over the Korean border and into Chinese airspace, strafing and bombing an airstrip. This incident was given detailed attention in the Chinese press as a resonant episode demanding Chinese intervention in the conflict. On September 25, 1950, an American B-29 bomber dropped bombs in Chinese territory, and on November 13, 1950, another B-29 plainly struck the city of Andong with a half-ton bomb. These incidents -- garishly publicized via photographs and interviews with the relatives of the deceased -- galvanized anti-American opinion in China and gave the CCP ample grist for the propaganda mill. When MacArthur ordered the destruction of “every installation, factory, city and village” in North Korea, the escalation was duly noted in the Chinese press (Stratemeyer, 1999:206, 260, 281).



Figure 12. Mi Gu, “Same Tune, Different Key,” *Cartoons to Resist America and Aid Korea*, (Shanghai 1951).

American accidental bombings were reported with anger in the Chinese press and presented with a distinctly Japanese twist. Sadistic elements and anti-Japanese themes increasingly pervaded Mi Gu’s cartoons in the wake of the bombings. Just two days after China’s intervention in Korea was announced to the Chinese people, he underscored the anti-American bitterness by completing a violent juxtaposition of Truman’s United States with militaristic Japan. The figure, entitled “Same Tune, Different Key,” features parallel monologues by Truman and Hideki Tojo, Japan’s old war minister. The final

panel culminates with Truman stating, "This is for 'freedom' in the world," while he unloads bombs onto the fertile Chinese earth. Ironically, Truman's government had sponsored Tojo's execution as a war criminal only two years earlier in Tokyo.

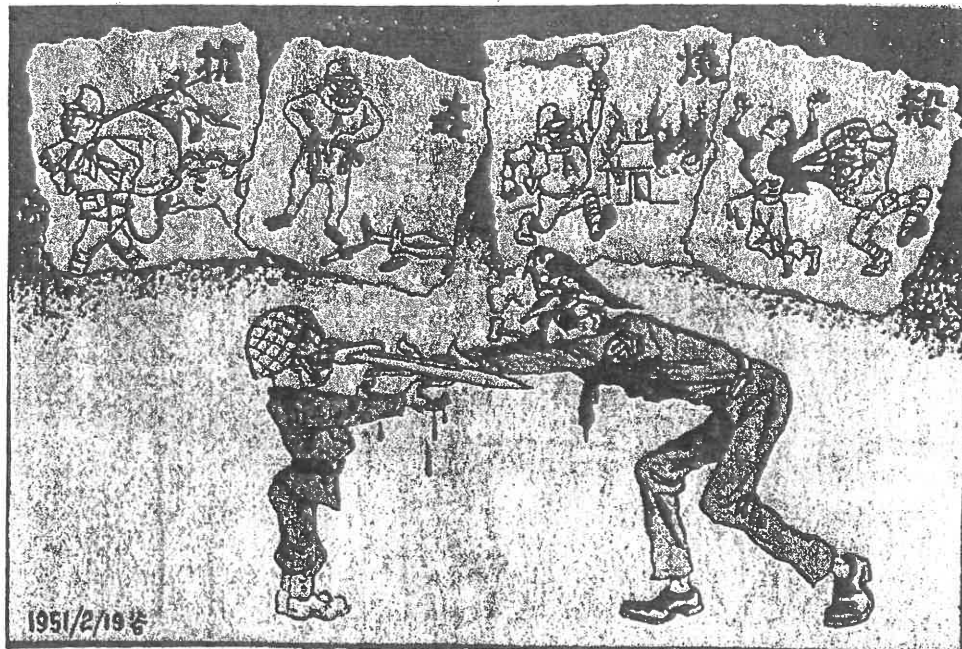


Figure 13. Mi Gu, *Cartoons to Resist America and Aid Korea*, (Shanghai 1951).

To an audience mindful of foreign armies and saturated in negative historical precedents, Mi Gu offered up an unmistakable message: the Americans, regardless of their dignified rhetoric, were capable of every atrocity committed by the Japanese. The old Japanese occupation of China had become a model for all other would-be conquerors, a paradigm for the lawless society that would emerge if the Americans were allowed to continue their northward advance. To reinforce this view, the CCP actively conflated the Americans with Japan's past atrocities of "looting, raping, burning, and killing."

Cartoonists used images of the Japanese not only to impugn the United States, but to preach the message of "never again." Aiding in this endeavor were the "days of national humiliation," an inseparable legacy of Mao's Nationalist predecessors. In one appeal, Figure 9, an aggressive Japanese policeman dominates the panel, beating a Chinese colonial. If the prostrate acceptance of such punishment was not offensive enough, the artist set the action against a backdrop of red-and-white "humiliation days," anniversaries of China's defeats at the hands of imperialist powers. The most infamous and emblematic of the days of them was September 18, known in China as 9-18, the day Japan invaded Northeast China in 1931. According to official propaganda past and present, 9-18 was a watershed, the date that everything changed, the date justifying any action in the nation's defense. Figure 14 highlighted the cipher like a fresh scar: the policeman's sword appears to draw blood from the date itself. Behind the deluge of calendar dates lies a burning home, an explicit

reminder of the destruction represented by the date. More immediately, the sender of this postcard propagated official historical narratives while also, perhaps, taking the opportunity to testify to his or her personal devotion to the Communist Party on the reverse side of the image.



15. 日本侵略半世紀，美帝一直做幫兇。

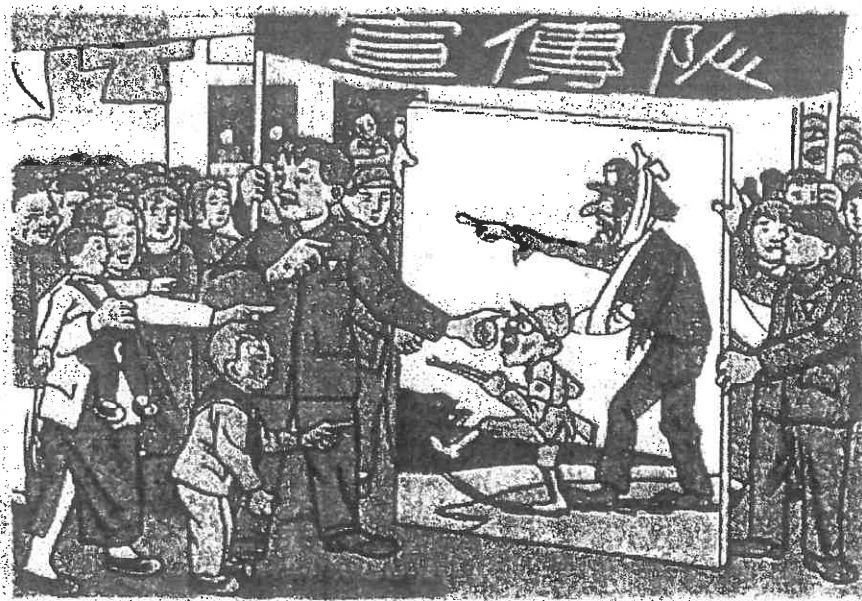
Figure 14. Mengzi, "Japan Invaded China for Half a Century; in This They Were Helped by American Imperialism," *Postcards Opposing Imperialist America's Rearmament of Japan*, (Hong Kong, 1950).

It Is Good To Grow up Quickly

The problem with mobilizing via the "days of humiliation" was that the youngest members of the state had no first hand knowledge of the events that were intended to summon up such bitterness. According to the CCP, children born in the 1940s needed to be educated in anti-Japanese values. Figure 15 shows a street pageant melding the need for youth education with a collective recollection of the period of Japanese occupation.

According to the caption, MacArthur is a secondary figure: the deeper purpose of the demonstration is to "denounce the crimes of the Japanese devils." The cartoon banner acts as an intermediary, allowing the community to confront their ostensible foes at a safe distance. MacArthur, the occupier of Japan, points back in mute struggle.

If the above postcard imparted children with a somewhat misleading portrait of the world beyond their neighborhood, other communist publications continued the line of thought. Artist Cai Zhenhua depicts a reluctant child, prompted by his or her elders, beginning the painful process of sharing in the parent's assured condemnation.



26. 學生展開里弄宣傳，居民控訴日寇罪行。

Figure 15. Mengzi, "Students Spread Propaganda in the Streets and Alleyways, Where Residents Denounce the Crimes of the Japanese Devils," *Postcards Opposing Imperialist America's Rearmament of Japan*, (Hong Kong, 1950).



Figure 16. Cai Zhenhua, *This is America*, (Shanghai, 1950), cover detail.



Figure 17. Chen Yinghao and Gu Bingxin, *The Accusation of Zhang A Gen*, (Shanghai, July 1951).

If the Party-State of the early 1950s functioned paternally in every regard, this was nowhere more true than in the field of education. The instability of previous decades had left a population starved for learning of any sort, and the communists gladly filled the void. With newly-commandeered presses, the CCP printed thousands of textbooks accounting for 62 percent of total mainland publishing output in 1950 (MacConaughy, 1951). Many of the texts, particularly those for younger readers, relied heavily on comic art to convey the intended message. In 1950, *Little Friend*, the venerable and respected children's periodical in Shanghai, sponsored a series of school primers whose playful facades veiled strong doses of anti-foreign ideology.

One school primer succinctly tells the story of Little Hei, a child in an unspecified rural village in China. As the pictorial narrative illustrates, Little Hei and his father Zhang A Gen have a good life until "Japanese devils" arrive, despoiling the crops and killing Chinese people.



Figure 18. Chen Yinghao and Gu Bingxin, "The Devils Left, and the Peasants Returned Home," *The Accusation of Zhang Agen*, (Shanghai, July 1951).

As befitting a patriotic narrative, the element of Chinese collaboration is entirely absent from this tale of resistance. Some peasants flee to the hills, where Little Hei reflects Mao's belief in the supremacy of guerrilla tactics by using a stone to overcome a well-armed Japanese soldier. Spurred on by Little Hei's primitive vengeance, the textbook narrates Figure 18: "The peasants all saw [Little Hei] / Everybody grabbed a hoe or a gun / They emerged from the mountain, / And chased the devils down. / The devils left / And the peasants returned home. / They saw all their possessions were burning / All the animals slaughtered / All the villagers had been killed by the devils." Surprisingly, the comic barely mentions the communist "liberation" of the village, turning instead to the breathless recounting of a rumor from a nearby village: America is rearming Japan. Upon hearing the news, Little Hei's father, representing the voice of the Party, rises at a public meeting to furiously declare that the Americans are contriving to again unleash the Japanese devils upon China. The Americans and their surrogates never appear in the comic, just as they never marched into Mao's China.

The CCP adroitly handled a classic dilemma: how does a political party mobilize support for a potentially disastrous foreign war? In 1950, the Communists turned to a strategy of substitution, treating the Americans in Korea as interchangeable with their prior enemies, the Japanese. In a period of primal warfare between China and the United States, anti-Japanese art testified to the malleability of imagery. In replacing Japan with the U.S., cartoon mediums were of inestimable help for the Party. At the same time, the forcible recollection of China's horrific experience with Japan led some Chinese people to question

the method. One intrepid reader complained that *Cartoon* magazine "reeked excessively of gunpowder." American diplomats speculated that more than six months of war and well-rehearsed public rallies had robbed Chinese cartoonists of their spontaneity and sapped them of their wit (MacConaughy, 1951). Anti-Japanese themes become mandated and ritualized; pure hatred and hagiography dominated the cartoon medium, serving only to inflame the Chinese people and raise the bile of past humiliation in the service of a questionable war.

In April 1951, American and Chinese armies burrowed in around the pockmarked 38th parallel and commenced two years of punishing trench warfare. The bloodletting along the parallel translated into intense conformist pressure on the home front. For cartoonists, the essentially useless nature of the enterprise in Korea could be reflected only in parodies of the Americans and their allies, not the gallant Chinese volunteers and certainly not the Chinese leadership. The very cartoonists who had supported the Communist Party during its long years of opposition were now called upon to buttress the Party's control of power. Working in a medium with innately satirical capacities, cartoonists were ill-suited to the wearying repetition demanded by the Propaganda Ministry and the cartoon handbooks. Zhang Ding laid down his pen in 1951 in favor of instructing students in calligraphy, the ancient refuge of the literati. China's anti-foreign cartoon history spiraled on, wheeling repeatedly back to the American imperialists and the ever-present image of the "Japanese devil."

Endnotes

¹ Wall posters and truck-mounted caricatures, as ubiquitous and ephemeral elements of street demonstrations, are best evidenced in photographs from the period. For examples, see Sam Tata, *Shanghai 1949: The End of an Era* (London: Batsford, 1989); Derek Bodde, *Peking Diary: A Year of Revolution* (New York: Henry Schumer, Inc., 1950).

² Under newly communist administration in 1949 and 1950, Chinese artists were organized into cartoon associations which functioned under the Ministry of Propaganda. The associations set production goals and encouraged collective work, but they also functioned as a forum for self-criticism and criticism from the Party, one's colleagues and superiors. Realizing that the individual cartoonist could no longer function outside of Party supervision; most artists adapted and aligned as best they could with the principles espoused by Mao at his "Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art." The relative autonomy of 1949 and 1950 ended with the creation of centralized art institutes in 1951.

³ All of these themes are on display in the Hunter Collection, a large repository

of Chinese comic art from the early Korean War period held by the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago, Illinois.

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