

# Japan in Wartime

# 盧溝橋事件→日中戦争

## The Marco Polo Bridge Incident

- Japanese Army engaged in a small battle with Chinese soldiers on July 7, 1937.
- Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro authorized the expansion of the battle.
- Japan took major cities of China (Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjin).
- But the Nationalist government did not negotiate with Japan.

# The Nanjing Massacre?

- In December 1937, Japanese troops entered Nanjing, and started to kill citizens.
- It is believed that the number of victims was more than tens of thousands.
- Japanese soldiers feared guerilla attacks, but were embarrassed with the vague line between Chinese soldiers and local citizens.
- The greater puzzle is that Japanese high command allowed the killings to proceed for weeks on end.

# Negotiations stalled

- Japan took cities and railroads, but the countryside was out of their control.
- The Nationalist government retreated to far western city of Chong-qing (重慶), and continued resistance.
- Tension with Soviet Union erupted in a major battle along the border of China and Mongolia, region called Nomonhan.
- In this battle, the better equipped Soviet forces overwhelmed the proud Kwantung Army.

# A New Government

- Japan created a new government to administer its territory. Wang Jingwei (汪兆銘) was nominated as the head.
- He justified collaboration with Japan by claiming that China and Japan should form a pan-Asian unity against western powers.
- Ishihara Kanji, the planner of the Manchuria takeover, had warned the extended military actions, and was relegated to minor position in Japan.
- Ishihara thought that Japan lacked enough resources to control China.

# Germany or Soviet Union?

- The major diplomatic doctrine for Japan at that time was cooperation with Germany and counter against Soviet Union.
- But Hitler suddenly announced a nonaggression treaty with Stalin, which was a violation of the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936.
- Furious at Hitler's betrayal, Prime Minister Hiranuma resigned.「欧州情勢は複雑怪奇」

# The Tripartite Act with Germany and Italy 1940

- Japan's military alliance with Germany and Italy committed the Axis powers to support each other against US.
- Hitler occupied France in 1940.
- Japanese leaders hoped that the path to southern advance had been cleared.
- US changed its diplomatic direction to deterring Japanese expansion.
- The US change provoked Japan's war hawks to argue for a preemptive strike against US.

# Toward Pearl Harbor

- US countered Japan's southern advance toward Indochina with a decisive move.
- It placed embargo on Japanese exports and cut off all foreign oil supplies to Japan.
- Japan had a difficult choice:
- US would stop embargo if Japan retreated completely from China.
- Otherwise, Japan could attack US, take control of Southeast Asian oil fields by force, and negotiate for cease-fire from the strengthened position.



# Pearl Harbor

- By November 1941 it became clear that a satisfactory diplomatic agreement with US was impossible.
- The navy started the plan to attack the US fleet at Pearl Harbor.
- Japan's foreign ministry intended to hand over a memorandum to declare a war to US officials, but they failed.
- The memorandum was delivered just after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

# The Pacific War

- The war began with a series of swift dramatic victories of the Japanese Army and Navy.
- The Pearl Harbor attack had become enshrined in American memory as an immoral “sneak attack.”
- American people’s anger allowed President Roosevelt to bring the US into the war against the Axis powers in Europe, something he had hesitated to do until that time in the face of reluctant public opinion.
- Japanese media claimed that Japan was pursuing a war to return Asia to Asian control.

# Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere

- Japanese government raised a vague plan to create a unity of East Asian nations including SE Asia. But the reality was harsh:
- Many Korean young men were mobilized to Japan and forced to work in factories and mines.
- Thousands of young women were sent throughout Asia and forced to serve the sexual needs of soldiers.
- *Comfort Women Controversy*: Some Japanese politicians, scholars, and journalists argue that *they* were voluntary and not forced by Japanese military.

# The war tide turned quickly against Japan

- US navy defeated Japanese fleet in consecutive battles on the sea.
- After losing Saipan, Japan's main islands became in range of bombings.
- Japan's air defenses were helpless against high-flying B-29s.
- In 1944, it was clear that Japan lost the war.

# The Economic New Order

- Japan's bureaucrats and military men pursued a path similar to the Nazis of Germany.
- They sought to replace messy pluralism with central planning.
- They believed industry should serve public goals of the state, and only state-controlled capitalism could resolve chronic conflict and crisis.

# National General Mobilization Law 1938

- It stipulated that once a time of national emergency was declared, the bureaucracy could issue any orders necessary, without Diet approval, to control material and human resources.
- Labor unions were ordered to dissolve by Patriotic Industrial Service Federation.
- Bureaucrats worked with school principals to assign new graduates to war industries.
- Adult men and women were drafted into workplaces.

# Origin of the Post-War Employment System

- Employment relation was no longer a contract between private parties.
- Employers were forced to offer a “living wage” that would rise with seniority to meet the increased needs of older workers with families.
- All employees were to receive pay raises twice a year, which was the origin of seniority-based wage widely observed today in Japan.
- The post-war union movement would build on this reform.

# 大政翼賛会

- In 1940 all existing parties were dissolved, and replaced by a political cheerleading squad called the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (IRAA), led by Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro.
- In 1942 Diet election the IRAA put 466 candidates and won 82% of the seats.
- However 199 newcomers were elected, and significant but limited pluralism remained.



# Prince Konoe Fumimaro

- His lineage as aristocrat close to the imperial family gave him particular legitimacy at this time of crisis.
- He killed himself before being arrested by GHQ.



# Fearing a Domestic Revolution

- Konoe and other political leaders are afraid of the prospect that:
  - The Soviet Union might enter the war.
  - The prolonged war would crush the imperial institution.
  - A domestic revolution might be initiated by high-level military and bureaucratic radicals.
- He urged the emperor to make peace with US ASAP in order to preserve the *Kokutai* (国体)

# Ending the War

- American forces launched the fierce battle for Okinawa.
- Prime Minister Suzuki tried to make diplomatic maneuvers based on the fantasy that the Soviet Union might mediate a surrender that would guarantee the emperor's survival.
- In August, US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Soviet invaded Manchuria.
- The emperor accepted the US surrender terms, and announced his decision on radio on 8/15.