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**‘Against Invisible Enemies’:
Japanese Bacteriological Weapons and China’s Cold War,
1949-1950**

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Abstract: Based upon documents from Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Archive of the People's Republic of China, this manuscript reconsiders the impact of an important event in Cold War history and in the history of anti-Japanese nationalism in China: the Soviet-sponsored Khabarovsk trials of December 1949. In trying twelve members of the Japanese military who had been associated with Ishii Shiro and the bacteriological weapons (BW) research of his "Unit 731," the Soviet Union wielded a potent instrument in shaping anti-Japanese discourse in the new China. Having had little foreknowledge of the trials and no international representation in other previous forums regarding Japanese war crimes, the newly ascendant Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was therefore obliged to trumpet the dangers of Japanese BW research and the wisdom of the Khabarovsk trials in preventing an American-sponsored return to Japanese militarism. The propaganda was clearly intended to smooth over the public acceptance in China of the incipient Sino-Soviet alliance, showing again the malleability of the anti-Japanese idea and the various means and motivations by which it was deployed by the CCP in the postwar years. The trials also presented a multiplicity of new bureaucracies in Beijing with an opportunity to accelerate the collection of evidence of Japanese war crimes on the mainland, indicating the specific evolution of war memory in the Chinese visualization of postwar Japan. This ongoing mobilization by the CCP indicates the extent to which the Chinese people saw their victimization at Japanese hands as not having strictly been completed with Japan's surrender. Having been aroused by a Soviet propaganda ploy, legitimate Chinese concerns over bacteriological weapons grew with great rapidity in spring 1950, resulting in an intense anti-Japanese mobilization of both party and people that was ultimately swept up into the Korean War.

Keywords: bacteriological weapons, Sino-Soviet relations, Japanese war crimes, Chinese nationalism, Korean War bacteriological weapons campaigns.

Introduction

Japanese soldiers and scientists perpetrated horrific war crimes across Asia from 1931-1945, but the investigation of, and trials for, these crimes occurred almost wholly within the politically-charged environment of the Cold War.¹ Just as Cold War tensions colored the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, ideological competition deeply inflected the manner of Allied prosecution of Japanese war crimes.² As victorious parties in the World War, the United States, the Soviet Union, and two divergent Chinese regimes each brought its own particular political needs to the postwar war crimes trials of Japanese defendants. Having swaggered into Tokyo's few undestroyed buildings in September 1945, the American occupation regime used war crimes trials to convince the Japanese people (and their American counterparts) that only a small clique of militarists had been responsible for the wartime cataclysm, absenting Emperor Hirohito from any culpability.³ As the United States established itself at the pinnacle of Allied power on the Japanese archipelago, the Soviet military command swept hundreds of thousands of Kwantung Army officers and soldiers northward and out of Manchuria from 1945-1946, using their labor but also hoarding the

¹ Richard Minear, *Victor's Justice*. Recent scholarship on Japanese war crimes is represented by Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *The Nanking Atrocity* (Berghahn Press, 2007) and Joshua Fogel, *The Rape of Nanking*.

² Norman J.W. Goda, *Tales from Spandau: Nazi Criminals and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³ Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito* (Harvard University Press, 2000); John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co./New Press, 1999)..

highest-ranking men to be tried at a more convenient time.⁴ In the aftermath of Japan's surrender, most large trials of Japanese war criminals remained squarely in the hands of the two big powers. Even after the Soviet Union suddenly transferred 971 of these Japanese POWs into Chinese communist custody in July 1950, the PRC government would take more than six years to embark upon independent trials of Japanese war criminals. These 1956 trials held in Shenyang and Taiyuan served a distinctly different purpose than prior attempts to secure justice for Japanese war crimes, but were intended to influence multiple foreign audiences.⁵ In every case, Japanese war criminals, though their crimes had occurred long before 1945, cast shadows into the Cold War and played a key role in the ideological propaganda battles that followed. War crimes trials of the Japanese, potentially a significant means of rectifying the wrongs of the past World War, were deeply politicized and brought little closure to the previous conflict.

⁴ William F. Nimmo, *Behind a Curtain of Silence: Japanese in Soviet Custody, 1945-1956* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988); see also interviews compiled by Thomas Stark, "Soviet Use and Treatment of Japanese PsW," Douglas MacArthur Memorial Archive, Microfilm Roll 629.

⁵ Fushun Zhanfan Guanlisuo (Fushun War Criminals Management Center), eds., *Riben Zhanfan de Zai Sheng Zhidi* (Place of New Life of Japanese War Criminals), (Beijing: Wuzhou Chuanbo Chubanshe, 2005); Adam Cathcart and Patricia Nash, "War Criminals and the Road to Sino-Japanese Normalization: Zhou Enlai and the Shenyang Trials, 1954-1956," *Twentieth-Century China* (April 2009); Takeshi Yoshida, "Brainwashing or Reflection?: The Emergence and Development of War Guilt and Responsibility in Postwar Japan," unpublished manuscript.

Because the postwar trials were so thoroughly saturated with international politics, the issue of bacteriological weapons (BW) crimes remained one of the most controversial and powerful issues of the early Cold War in Asia.⁶ While the issue was overtly trumpeted across the socialist lands, Allied leaders and propagandists sought to tamp down speculation about the legacies of Japanese BW. Bacteriological war crimes therefore represented a highly sensitive and multifaceted postwar problem resistant to any simple solution. Physically, the “factories of death” were only partially destroyed in 1945 and continued looming outside of Harbin; bacteria and subsequent recurrent plague lingered in Northeast China and Zhejiang province; and Ishii Shiro, whose research as head of “Unit 731” of the Japanese Kwantung Army had made these things possible, was living in Japan evading prosecution. For General Douglas MacArthur and the American occupation in Tokyo, the opportunity to learn the results of Japanese experiments on living subjects in Manchuria, and the fear that the Soviets would acquire the results, was worth the price of protecting Ishii from prosecution.⁷ The Soviets managed to interview Ishii in Tokyo in 1947, but their main points of contact with

⁶ Sheldon Harris, *Factories of Death, Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2002); David Williams and Peter Wallace, *Unit 731: The Japanese Army's Secret of Secrets*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989); Hal Gold, ed. *Unit 731 Testimony* (North Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), pp. 221-222.

⁷ Sheldon Harris, *Factories of Death, Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2002); GHQ Far East Command Check Sheet, Note from G-2 to the Legal Section, 17 April 1947, R.G. 331, Box 1434, 20, Case 330, U.S. National Archives; GHQ Far East Command Check Sheet, Note from G-2 to the Legal Section, 9 June 1947, R.G.331, Box 1434, 20, Case 330, U.S. National Archives; Tsuneishi Keiichi, translated by John Junkerman, “Unit 731 and the Japanese Imperial Army’s Biological Warfare Program,” <<http://japanfocus.org/products/details/2194>>, accessed 24 October 2006.

BW knowledge were Unit 731 members who had been swept up in the Soviet drive through China's Northeast and remained in Soviet custody in the Soviet Far Eastern center of Khabarovsk. It was in Khabarovsk, the military and administrative center of the Russian Far East, where the Soviets were slowly preparing a prosecution. Jiang Jieshi and the national [Nationalist²] government showed little apparent interest in obtaining BW capabilities, but provincial health departments in the Guomintang heartland of Zhejiang were actively researching the ongoing effects of Japanese BW on local populations.⁸ Jiang's deep reliance on American aid and the inchoate nature of the Chinese civil war led his government to keep quiet about Ishii Shiro's activity; Jiang eschewed any call for the Japanese scientist's prosecution.⁹ And, as shall be seen, it was precisely this type of great-power dependency which would lead the CCP to the opposite result, calling for the immediate prosecution of Ishii Shiro and Emperor Hirohito for BW crimes. While the CCP had already proven its anti-Japanese *bona fides* to the Chinese people, this particular campaign of criticism leveled at the highest levels of the Japanese state was not initiated by the CCP. Instead, at a time of great sensitivity in the early months of the PRC, while Mao Zedong and

⁸ Williams and Wallace, *Unit 731*, p.95-101; Harris, *Factories of Death*, p. 110. One of the Chinese doctors involved in the original investigation of plague outbreaks in Changde in 1941 presented his report to an International Scientific Commission in 1952 during investigations on American BW use; the report was subsequently incorporated into *Report of the International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China*. (Peking, 1952), Appendix K. This larger report mentions Jiang Jieshi's complicity in Japanese BW, but, because of its use as propaganda during the 1952 campaign, calls the authenticity of the accusations into doubt.

⁹ Fang Quanpu, "Japan-Taiwan Relations, 1949-1952," Ph.D. dissertation, Beijing University, 2006.

Zhou Enlai were in Moscow carrying out negotiations, the CCP would be forced by Soviet action to trumpet the BW issue domestically, increasing anti-Japanese sentiment in the interests of Soviet friendship.¹⁰ For all of the postwar powers in East Asia, Cold War imperatives seemingly overtook the need for objective pursuit of historical truth, fracturing any notion of consensus on the prosecution of BW criminals.

New documents from the Foreign Ministry Archive of the PRC now allow for a more complete reassessment of the postwar Chinese communist attitude toward Japanese bacteriological warfare crimes. These archives, along with simple examination of newspapers from the period, and a reading of the newly published manuscripts of the major Chinese participants, indicates the error of scholars who assert the “silence of [the] mainland...government over Japanese BW crimes.”¹¹ In this regard, many researchers have taken for granted Sheldon Harris’ similar assertion of Chinese silence in his *Factories of Death*, a book whose classic status was not buttressed by work in Chinese archives (and could not

¹⁰ Dieter Heinzig, *The Soviet Union and Communist China 1945-1950: The Arduous Road to the Alliance* (Armonk, NY.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004); Shen Zhihua, *Sidalin, Mao Zedong yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2003); Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu Mosike de En En Yuan Yuan* (Nanning: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1999); Yang Kuisong, “The Sino-Soviet Alliance and Nationalism: A Contradiction,” *Social Sciences in China* Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (Summer 2005): 86-99.

¹¹ Jing-Bao Nie, “The United States Cover-up of Japanese Wartime Medical Atrocities: Complicity Committed in the National Interest and Two Proposals for Contemporary Action,” *The American Journal of Bioethics* Vol. 6 No. 3 (2006): W21-W33. Nie’s own bibliography indicates that the CCP took interest in BW crimes also in 1961, when the Party authorized Chunzhong Chubanshe to publish a translation from the Japanese of Akiyama’s *Tokushu Butai 731* (Special Unit 731), (Kyoto: Sanichi Shobo, 1956).

have been, as the archives only opened in 2004, postdating the untimely death of Mr. Harris).¹² In fact, the People's Republic was anything but silent about BW crimes. The vocal public campaign in China to publicize the Khabarovsk trials and the need to prosecute Hirohito for war crimes was accompanied by extensive internal mobilization of Central and Provincial ministries to collect evidence of BW crimes and prevent further attacks and outbreaks. That various branches of the new Chinese government, including many former Guomintang officials, earnestly sought evidence of Japanese war crimes showed that, ultimately, the BW issue would lose its linkage to pro-Soviet mobilization. The documents now bring us to [a crucial moment in the] evolution of anti-Japanese sentiment in China, a moment that unfolds within one of the most richly studied and vital events of the early PRC: the negotiations for the Sino-Soviet Alliance.

The Khabarovsk Trials and the Sino-Soviet Alliance

In late 1949, the issue of Japanese war crimes remained far from the minds of the CCP central leadership. Mao was in Moscow negotiating with Stalin, seemingly preoccupied with resolving issues of Soviet naval bases in Dalian and Soviet control of the Changchun railway, along with giant loans and security guarantees. Many of the issues, particularly those involving rights in Northeast China, had unwanted resonance with Japan's previously successful empire building in China, and the security guarantees would eventually mention aggression from Japan specifically. However, while Japan was referred to at many points in the negotiations, the issue of war criminals never arose as the focus of conversations with

¹² Harris, *Factories of Death*, pp. 316-317.

Soviet leaders.¹³ Of the three principal Chinese leaders involved in Soviet affairs, neither Mao Zedong, Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai, nor Liu Shaoqi (ruling in Beijing in the absence of Mao and Zhou) expressed any interest in pursuing the question of Japanese war crimes at such a [that] moment. And seen from the context of trials themselves, why would the CCP had been interested at that moment? The Tokyo Trials had been concluded for nearly one year, and Mao had already covered his anti-Japanese bases by laying down withering opprobrium in January 1949 against the Guomintang mistrial of Japanese General Yasuji Okamura.¹⁴ While the postwar Chinese public was axiomatically vigilant toward Japan's industrial and military revival, the idea of embarking on war crimes trials at such a moment for the PRC was almost worthy of ridicule. The CCP was in the process of solidifying power at home, and the legacy of Japanese war crimes that they inherited was scattered to say the least. Much of the documentation on Japanese war crimes remained in the custody of the Soviet Union, and even questions as straightforward as which Japanese POWs should receive indictments were left unresolved.

It was therefore somewhat surprising when, in the waning days of December 1949, quite unilaterally during the midst of negotiation with the Chinese People's Republic, the Soviets undertook a six day trial of Japanese POWs in the Soviet Union. On December 24, 1949, a Soviet military court in the Far Eastern border city of Khabarovsk indicted twelve

¹³ Sergey Radchenko and David Wolff, "To the Summit via Proxy-Summits: New Evidence from Soviet and Chinese Archives on Mao's Long March to Moscow," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* Vol. 16, pp. 105-183.

¹⁴ Mao Zedong, "On Arresting Okamura and Guomintang Civil War Criminals," January 1949, *Selected Works* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1978), Vol. IV, p. 327.

members of Japanese BW units who had been stationed in China during the Second World War. All of the defendants pled guilty to assisting in, or maintaining knowledge of, the Japanese BW program. Clocking in at four days, the trials were relatively brief in duration—certainly if measured against the glacially slow three year Tokyo trials—and although the sentences were relatively lenient by Soviet standards, the verdicts were nevertheless trumpeted as a well-justified work of justice upon Japanese militarism.¹⁵ Prosecutors emphasized that the Japanese had tested BW on prisoners, mostly Chinese, while preparing for full-scale bacteriological warfare against the people of China and the Soviet Union.¹⁶ While neither Ishii Shiro nor Emperor Hirohito were indicted *in absentia*, prosecutors at Khabarovsk made insistent connections between these individuals, claiming that they held responsibility for the BW crimes perpetrated against the Chinese since the early 1930s. These assertions allowed the Soviets to exploit a perceived weakness in U.S. East Asian policy by conjointly attacking the self-serving policy of the U.S. occupation of protecting Hirohito and ignoring the Japanese BW crimes. The tactic also was meant to demonstrate Sino-Soviet friendship by pointing an accusing finger at those who participated in or maintained complacency toward Japanese atrocities in China.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Trial Documents on Accusations Against Former Japanese Servicemen for Preparation and Use of Bacteriological Weapons*, Foreign Language Press, Moscow, 1950.

¹⁶ “Japan Said to Test Bacteriological Warfare on GIs,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1949.

¹⁷ For discussion of how the Khabarovsk trials also defended the Soviets against increasingly embarrassing U.S. and Japanese accusations of lugubrious repatriation of Japanese from the Soviet Far East, see William Joseph

On December 29, 1949, CCP media outlets broke the news ~~on the mainland~~ of the Soviet military tribunal in Khabarovsk, and the news dominated Chinese newspapers for two or three days thereafter. The front page of the *Lüshun & Dalian Daily (LüDa Renmin Ribao)* on December 30, 1949 ran long articles about the Khabarovsk trials. The main editorial, below the fold, was absolutely immense – providing much valuable material for cadre to study.¹⁸ All of the papers provided reprints of *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, as few editors at local papers would have the time or gumption to compose something so detailed and complex about such a delicate international issue, at least not without the commentary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The lack of any editorials or relating articles of local origin from a single regional paper in Northeast China shows the rapidity with which the order came down to publish the news. It also indicates, quite correctly, a lack of prior coordination between Soviet and Chinese foreign ministry on publicizing the issue. The Foreign Ministry Archive is completely absent of any files indicating knowledge of the Khabarovsk action prior to its public announcement, much less behind-the-scenes Sino-Soviet discussion about how to coordinate the campaign that followed at the Soviet impetus.

The Khabarovsk trials took place in the context of a mounting propaganda war for Chinese public opinion. Scrupulous CCP editors were increasingly leavening newspapers and journals with ever-more numinous articles translated from the Soviet press. Moscow's TASS coverage of the Khabarovsk trials flowed readily into Chinese media outlets both because the Soviets demanded it and CCP wanted to appear accommodating to the Soviets

Sebald with Russell Brines, *With MacArthur in Japan: A Personal History of the Occupation* (London: The Cresset Press, 1965).

¹⁸ *LüDa Ribao*, Dec. 30, 1949.

at a sensitive moment.¹⁹ Thus, when the Soviets undertook to publicize the positive aspects of the Khabarovsk trials, it was expected that the Chinese media would partake in and support the campaign.²⁰

The CCP dutifully followed in their press coverage the themes laid out by the Soviet precedent. Emphasizing Hirohito's culpability, Xinhua dispatches broadened the definition of Japanese war crimes to expand beyond Northeast China to discussion of the harm Japan had caused to the Soviet people. Here the Khabarovsk trials served a dual purpose: the Soviets were exacting justice upon the Japanese, and the trial could put to rest the notion that the Soviets had permitted Japan to run wild in China in the 1930s without tendering any sacrifices of their own. Sacrifices had been made by Soviet comrades against Japan, the

¹⁹ To Malenkov, Liu Shaoqi noted the CCP's desire to set up "Russian language international propaganda broadcasting" in Shanghai and Beijing, and beseeched Soviet help with this venture. Liu also expressed a desire for help setting up "English language comrades" (*yingwen de tongzhi*) for establishing overseas propaganda capability. As for Soviet film specialists, these would come to China at Stalin's suggestion. See Liu Shaoqi, "Letter to Malenkov Concerning the Problem of Inviting News Specialists from the Soviet Union," August 2, 1949, *Liu Shaoqi Wengao*, vol. 1, pp. 42-43; Liu Shaoqi, "Telegraph to CCP Central Committee Concerning the Problem of Soviet Film Crews Coming to Work in China," August 12, 1949, *Liu Shaoqi Wengao*, vol. 1, p. 49; Central Committee to East China Bureau, revised by Liu Shaoqi, "Telegraph Regarding Work of Film Crews in East China Areas," Nov. 2, 1949, *Liu Shaoqi Wengao*, vol. 1, p. 134.

²⁰ Jing-Bao Nie, "The West's Dismissal of the Khabarovsk Trial as 'Communist Propaganda': Ideology, Evidence and International Bioethics," *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April 2004): 32-42.

stories implicitly argued. More pragmatically, such rhetoric lent to the theme of a natural alliance against Japan and the United States based on the mutual suffering at the hands of the Japanese and equal threat in the face of an impending US-Japanese military alliance.

A front-page article in the *Shenyang Ribao* on December 29 hearkened back to the establishment of Unit 731, the most infamous of the Japanese BW units, mirroring the testimony at the Khabarovsk trial. Unit 731 had operated under the direction not only of Lt. Ishii Shiro, the article asserted, but of Emperor Hirohito. The article, subtitled “Defendant Admits Using BW,” went on to outline in detail Japan’s BW facilities in Manchuria. One passage described an underground jail populated by “Chinese patriots *and Soviet people* into whom the Japanese injected chemical weapons,” portraying the USSR as an equal victim of Japan’s depravity.²¹ Subsequent articles emphasized mutual Sino-Soviet suffering from Japan’s BW program, citing the 1939 Soviet-Japanese border battle of Nomonhan.²² The *Shenyang Ribao* later used the trials as a springboard for discussion of Japan’s bacteriological war crimes beyond the northeast, extending analysis to Japanese-initiated plague outbreaks in Guangzhou and Nanjing in the early 1940s. The articles served not only a historical purpose, but criticized the omission of these facts from the Tokyo Trials, all the while

²¹ “Soviet Union Military Trial of Japanese War Criminals,” *Shenyang Ribao*, December 29, 1949, p. 1 [emphasis added].

²² “Soviet Coastal Military Region Military Court Continues Prosecution of Japanese Biological War Criminals: Shantian Qisan [山田乞三] Admits the Production of Biological Weapons for the Purpose of Waging War Against the USSR, Mongolia, and China,” *Shenyang Ribao*, Dec. 30, 1949, p. 1.

praising the Khabarovsk prosecution as a vigorous counterfoil to American judicial inaction.²³

The Foreign Ministry accelerated its exchange of documents with Xinhua in Beijing, funneling newsworthy items and bacteriological weapons charges to the news agency for publication. The Foreign Ministry and the Health Ministry each siphoned documents to Xinhua, and it appears that after the Soviet declaration of December 29, the news agency took real interest in promoting the atrocities of Japanese BW research in mainland China. Thus, at the very outset of the 1950s, on New Year's Day, Chinese newspaper readers were greeted by no fewer than three articles on Japanese bacteriological warfare. The first was a translated *Pravda* piece on the trials clearly intended to stir anti-Japanese nationalism; two accompanying articles discussed the views of Soviet as well as French experts who asserted that while some Japanese were receiving justice in Khabarovsk, America was recalcitrant to bring charges against Japanese war criminals under its control.²⁴

In Lüshun, on January 7 scientists convened for a meeting on the theme of BW, and the Soviet position: against both imperialism and bacteriological weapons atrocities. In urging China to sign an alliance with the Soviet Union, the scientists were hardly unique. However, this reports' emphasis on spreading the propaganda campaign well beyond pro-Soviet aims is worth noting. The following excerpts from the scientists' report on the

²³ "Soviet Court Continues Prosecution of Japanese Biological War Criminals," *Shenyang Ribao*, Dec. 31, 1949, p. 1.

²⁴ "Prosecuting the Japanese Chemical War Criminals Equals Prosecuting All the Chemical Warfare Criminals: Maiyevsky's Article Thesis Published in *Pravda*," *Renmin Ribao*, Jan. 1, 1950.

meeting are of interest both for their insistence on the justification for a Sino-Soviet alliance, and for their unusual interpretation of the Japanese BW crimes. A broad editorial by Li Shiliang (李士亮) entitled “Imperialism is Itself an Atrocity” (帝国主义就是罪恶) noted “we can see how American imperialists try to take over everything, economically and otherwise in China, Vietnam, and other places, massacring millions. The Americans made the atomic bomb and they made bacteriological weapons and chemical weapons to massacre even more people.” Turning American technological superiority to the advantage of the CCP, the scientists interpreted BW research as of a piece with the atomic bomb, perhaps playing to the knowledge and consequent opposition to the United States by the tens of thousands of Japanese still living in Dalian. The editorial also showed how the impetus to publicize the Khabarovsk trials, the Soviets and the CCP further stoked the discourse on Chinese victimhood:

The Chinese people are the worst victims of fascism’s crimes and we must, therefore, increase our spirit of vigilance.... First we must increase defense against bandit agents’ work, because bacteriological weapons are not possible to see with one’s eyes. Bacteriological weapons represent an incomprehensible type of warfare; these are weapons that can be used at any time (平时). We must spare nothing in the defense against BW.

To do this we must use every available method. Through a series of movements, we must make books, newspapers, radio broadcasts, movies, folk performances, songs, opera, etc., telling the masses about science work and how to protect themselves against common diseases and the deadly crimes of the bandits. We must use science thusly to serve the whole people’s production, pooling our talents together as one to increase national defense.

Finally and yet most importantly, we need more and ever-increasingly to let the Soviet Union lead the peaceful democratic people of the world in unity and cooperation. Soviet power will protect us from those who love war and prevent agents [of imperialism] from freely carrying out their incendiary and illegal atrocities. Proof of this idea can be seen in the first-ever decision of a court to try the Japanese scientists [in Khabarovsk] who are the bacteriological warfare war criminals for their especially big crimes dating from years back.

In spite of all of this, scientists may yet exist who will continue to aid imperialism by gathering research to create whose purpose is to inflict death on a massive scale. We don't understand the ways of these horrific killers and running dogs who remain free to carry out such behavior, nor do we understand their spirit of running amok to commit atrocities. Therefore we must use the spirit of the [Khabarovsk] trials to conduct propaganda, using the best methods as scientists to educate, drill, and bring our knowledge to the people. This is the kind of work we can carry out.²⁵

A number of important themes shine through in this editorial. The article clearly shows the convergence of the BW trial with the hunt for domestic agents of the Guomindang, and the rhetoric also clearly prefigures that of the later patriotic hygiene campaigns of 1952.²⁶ Most importantly, the editorial's emphasis on the lessons of the BW revelations should be noted. According to the authors, Soviet leadership alone could protect China from militarists abroad and keep China safe from further crimes of Japanese science. What went unspoken here was the inability of the PRC as it was presently configured to assure the guarantee of security against a Japanese revival, in what was effectively a litmus test for any modern Chinese regime.

Just as the Lüshun scientists urged each other to overflow the common methods of editorial writing into the arts of agitation, so too did the CCP seek to bring the BW issue forward to the whole population via the publication of cartoons. In framing public discourse on BW crimes, Chinese cartoons played a role that was perhaps as important as the published discussions of experts and articles. Cartoons conveyed an essentially similar, but more biting, message directed at both literate elites and semi-literate citizens. Like the

²⁵ Li Shiliang (李士亮), "Imperialism is Itself an Atrocity" (帝国主义就是罪恶), *LuDa Ribao*, Jan. 8, 1950

²⁶ Ruth Rogaski, "Nature, Annihilation, and Modernity: China's Korean War Germ-Warfare Experience Reconsidered," pp. 386-390.

printed articles, cartoons on the Japanese threat conveyed the importance of the Khabarovsk trials, but articulated CCP policy terms that were more basic and unmistakable: the Soviet Union was tough on Japanese bacteriological warfare, while the United States was resurrecting Japanese militarism. Cartoonists frequently paired negative images of the Japanese with depictions of stern Soviet judges, familiarizing viewers with the benefits of Soviet alliance. Similarly, Japanese were also juxtaposed with their big-nosed American masters. On January 8, 1950, the *Renmin Ribao* published one such cartoon by the popular artist Hua Junwu concerning both of the major powers of the Cold War and their differing attitudes toward Japanese BW crimes. [Figure 1.]



Figure 1. Hua Junwu, "An Obvious Contrast," *Renmin Ribao*, January 8, 1950.

In the top panel, Hua Junwu depicts the Khabarovsk trials, where a judge, “the Soviet Union,” holds a paper decreeing “Verdicts Ready for Japanese Bacteriological Weapons War Criminals, Khabarovsk Region: Go to Labor Camp for 25 Years and 18 Years of Imprisonment.” Friendship with the USSR was thus depicted as a means of satisfying the Chinese need to see Japan humbled. Hua had had years of practice caricaturing Japanese soldiers, and had scored many successes in his depictions of American imperialist troops, resulting in his work being reprinted in Pyongyang. However, his drawing of Soviet friends in Figure 1 indicates that he lacked experience in depicting Russians and was seeking for a method appropriate to the new relationship. While the Soviet judge in Figure 1 is ill-defined, the Japanese are depicted clearly enough, all humbled by their manifest errors. Contrasting with the moral clarity of Khabarovsk, the bottom panel depicts an “American Occupation Office,” where a large “American Imperialist” looks down proudly at the “Hidden Japanese Bacteriological War Criminal Takenori.”²⁷ Smoke issues from the American’s pipe (positioned at his wrist), either a reference to Douglas MacArthur or an inference of the past clouds of chemical agents released in China by the Japanese. The “American Imperialist,” naturally, is gratified at the obedience of his diminutive Japanese assistant. In both top and bottom panels, we note that the Japanese remain clad in Kwantung army uniforms, indicating their inherent ties to militarism, and MacArthur’s acceptance of Japanese militarism representing a potential future threat to China. Although depictions of Japanese war criminals, even the general Okamura Yasuji, rarely featured names, this cartoon did. Perhaps Hua Junwu intended for literate readers to be attuned to a pun contained in the

caption: Takanori's first name, when rendered into Chinese (Si Lang 四郎), is homophonous with *se lang* 色狼, or "sex wolf."

As news of the Khabarovsk trials faded into background with the coming of the New Year, the Chinese news media moved forward with several stories that unhooked Soviet trials from Japanese atrocities and focused more purely on the latter topic. The coordination between the Foreign Ministry and the Xinhua grew larger in early January 1950, when Japanese atrocities took on greater scrutiny in the press. Some of the articles stemmed from reader responses to the articles about Khabarovsk, showing the unintended consequences of the Soviets pushing the topic of Japanese BW to the front of the Chinese public debate. One reader's letter to Xinhua came as a response to Xinhua Ribao's articles of December 31, 1949.²⁸ On January 12, the reader offered his critiques to local officials:

To the responsible comrade in the Beijing City People's Government:

I saw the fourth version of the article printed in the *Xinhua Ribao* on the last day of '49 regarding "Japanese War Criminals Preparations For and Guilty Use of Bacteriological Weapons." This article included the phrase "using bacteriological weapons during the war against China," a short way of saying that many Japanese war criminals in China released bacteriological agents. I know this, however I still accept that past casualties attributed to such weapons are 几乎丧命的.

There is a "blood inhaling insect" [e.g., mosquito] bacteria [e.g., malaria]. This bacteria is in water. When I was in Zhenjiang Beigushan (at Tianlu Temple), many people adjacent to the Yangtze River got this sickness. According to the local people's discussion, this disease was released at the time when Japanese

²⁸ Liu Dong (刘东) to the Responsible Comrade at Xinhua, "About Xinhua Ribao's Handling of the Handwritten Letter to Our Foreign Affairs Ministry Regarding Japanese War Criminals Spreading Biological Weapons in Our Country, Hope to Publish," MFA Archive, 105-00076-02, pp. 3-5.

people were in China, and it has been preserved until now. Then after I recovered from the sickness in Suzhou Panmenli's Hebin, there was something written: "This water contains "malaria bugs" released by the Japanese; do not use this water." Ah! There are still many such testimonies of Japanese releasing bacteriological weapons in China! Please responsible comrades, could you not inform the government of this?²⁹

While the letter appears relatively elementary, and certainly did not spur investigations, it was useful for propaganda purposes.

That the CCP considered reprinting this letter indicates that the government thought that basic education to the Chinese public about the BW crimes of Japan was ~~further necessary~~ [still needed]. The notion of mass involvement, and the value of individual testimonies, were further highlighted. However, at its core, it shows how BW-related items, indeed anything that validated the strategy, was published immediately and with some urgency at that time.³⁰ The apparent lack of large numbers of similar documents predating the Khabarovsk trials contrasted greatly with the glut of documents that followed the trials, ranging from BW investigations, speculations, and denunciations. These indicate that, apart from of the areas of the Northeast, public agitation on these issues was mostly new at the time. The short citizen letter above drifted to the top of China's foreign affairs bureaucracy, receiving attention from Zhou Enlai's office, and subsequently Zhang Hanfu and Hu Qiaomu. Zhang Hanfu indicated that the letter should be shared with news agencies in

²⁹ Liu Dong (刘东) to the Responsible Comrade at Xinhua, "About Xinhua Ribao's Handling of the Handwritten Letter to Our Foreign Affairs Ministry Regarding Japanese War Criminals Spreading Biological Weapons in Our Country, Hope to Publish," MFA Archive, 105-00076-02, pp. 3-5.

³⁰ Not incidentally, this type of citizen testimony, often inaccurate, is precisely what helped to push forward the 1952 campaign and led to serious inaccuracies of assessment of U.S. BW use. See Patricia Nash, *Wittenberg* p. 105; see also Rogaski, pp. 381-415.

Nanjing in particular, while the Asia Office of the MFA directed Xinhua to publish the piece immediately.³¹

On January 19, seeking material to keep the campaign going, the Waijiaobu asked Xinhua expressly to publish the citizen's letter about the insects.³² The same day, the Foreign Ministry noted its receipt of BW-related documents from *Nanjing Ribao* which they held in reserve for publication.³³ Hu Qiaomu's commentary on the letter is particularly telling. In one of the very few pieces of evidence revealing Hu's hand in the vast MFA correspondence, Hu states that the note should "be kept by our department for further use in the future."³⁴ Hu Qiaomu's involvement in the process shows that the BW issue, specifically the manner in which it should be publicized and the degree to which to involve the masses, was granted the highest levels of internal attention in Zhongnanhai. The

³¹ Ibid, pp. 6-7. Notes of Zhou Enlai's Office, Zhang Hanfu, Asian Department of Foreign Ministry, and Hu Qiaomu.

³² "Note from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Responsible Comrade at Xinhuaribao shehui fuwushi," MFA Archive, 105-00076-02, p. 8.

³³ "Note from First Secretary to Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Jan. 19, 1950, MFA Archive, 105-00076-02, p. 6-7.

³⁴ Hu's ubiquity in the early years of the PRC is belied by his absence in the archives, where a search for his name in titles of documents turns up exactly zero documents. Perhaps the guardians of this canonical leader's documents are hoarding his personal archives in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, where the former propagandist ended his active career as President. For published materials on Hu, see Hu Qiaomu *Hu Qiaomu Wenji*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1992); *Hu Qiaomu Shuxinji*. (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2002).

Foreign Ministry in Beijing closely tabulated and traced the publication of articles and media pieces about the BW campaign.

The Northeast Connection

Some ministries in the CCP bureaucracy were more ready than others to spring upon this news and expand upon it. In Northeast China (Dongbei), the regional government had already been collecting evidence of Japan's crimes, and was better equipped to begin publicizing the Khabarovsk trials. As the area of China longest consolidated under CCP rule (as Yanan had been evacuated in 1947), the Northeast naturally led the way ~~forward~~ on the BW question.³⁵

One of the foremost publishers of material was the Northeast People's Government Department of Public Health. This department had been involved in plague prevention quite heavily since 1946, when a major outbreak had occurred near Pingfan. In 1950, they published a number of exposes on Takenori, as well as more entertaining short stories on the themes of BW, stories aimed at a younger demographic.³⁶ Specific accounts of Unit 731 and the activities of Ishii Shiro, who for once was referred to more than Hirohito or

³⁵ On CCP consolidation in the Northeast, see Robert Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Victory in Manchuria, 1945-1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

³⁶ On anti-Soviet sentiment among Chinese youth, see Strategic Services Unit, Mukden [Shenyang], April 11, 1946, document no. A-67094, "Student Demonstrations in Mukden," National Archives Microfilm Publication M1656, roll 1; Strategic Services Unit Intelligence Reports, 1945-1946; Records of the Office of Strategic Services, Record Group 226; Archives II Research Room Services Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Okamura Yasuji, filled papers in Northeast China and were printed as pamphlets.³⁷ In Harbin, the Weishengbu published an 80-page pamphlet whose humorous title page -- a cartoon image of a portly MacArthur spiriting away a toxic baby representing Unit 731 war criminals and Hirohito -- belied the utter seriousness of the contents. This large collection of research materials on the BW problem was issued rapidly, indicating the comprehensive research done on Unit 731 in Harbin and that city's leading position in promoting justice for the crimes. Within this pamphlet were a large amount of evidence about the five individuals who were currently in Japan who they wished to try, along with extensive sections dedicated to the Khabarovsk ~~trials~~ evidence.³⁸

On February 5, 1950 *Renmin Ribao* ran a huge headline stating: "Soviet Government Presents a Note to Our Government Suggesting the Establishment of a Special International Military Court to Prosecute Bacteriological War Criminal Hirohito."³⁹ The newspaper went on to give evidence of the chemical weapons facilities and testimonials that the Japanese had use aircraft to spread pests over China's southern areas. Such headlines, focusing on areas remote from China's northeast, not only indicated that the Japanese bacteriological weapons program had spread far beyond Manchuria, but represented the CCP drive to mobilize the entire nation around the problems of the Northeast. The use of the BW issue more than six

³⁷ Foreign Ministry Archives, File # 105-00076-02, 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料, p. 80.

³⁸ "Evidence Materials of Unit 731 Bacteriological Weapons Atrocities," MFA Archives, 105-00076-03, 2.1.1950, pp. 10-24, 26, 35, 40-55.

³⁹ *Renmin Ribao*, Feb. 5, 1950.

weeks after the Khabarovsk trials had concluded showed Soviet awareness of the potency of the BW issue as a lever over Chinese public opinion. Again the initiation was Soviet, not Chinese.

A survey of Xinhua publications reveal the narrative taken by the CCP in regards to Japanese BW crimes and remain an important means of gauging the desired public reaction to the Soviet trials. However, analysis of recently released inner-Party documents are now beginning to allow for confirmation of motives behind the publication and a deeper understanding of the backroom politics involved with the issue. What is revealed is that as the pace of negotiations and drafts accelerated in Moscow, so too did inner-Party debate, negotiation, and correspondence about the BW issue. The role of Japan was therefore increased in public communications anticipating the alliance. On February 6, Liu Shaoqi, spent a little more than half an hour at the Soviet embassy in Beijing dealing in most explicit fashion with the Soviets on the war criminal issue. As relayed by the Soviet Ambassador to his government, Liu said:

1) The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China supports the Soviet government's suggestion that Emperor Hirohito be handed over to an international military criminal court. The [publication of the] note is already arousing the whole society to support the proposal.

Liu Shaoqi said that he has already instructed Vice Foreign Minister Li Kenong to draft a reply on behalf of the Central Government to support the Soviet government's note. The Central Government itself intends to present this note to the Soviet Union and British governments. Owing to the lack of recognition of the PRC by the American and French governments, we intend to have the note passed to these governments via the British. *Liu Shaoqi asked for my help with the drafting of the [PRC] Foreign Ministry's response to the note, because the Chinese Foreign Ministry lacks sufficient experience, and they have not studied or drafted analogous documents [emphasis added].*⁴⁰

It appears difficult to believe that, with the Party's long experience in decrying Japanese militarism along with all the self-assurance flowing out of Beijing at this time, that the Chinese Communist Party could credibly assert that they lacked the experience to draft a memorandum about Japanese war crimes. However, it appears that Liu deferred to the Soviets ~~most~~ completely in this matter. His assertion that the masses were already mobilized to support the directive is likely correct.

In connection with Liu Shaoqi's meeting, Zhou Enlai sent a telegram from Moscow to Liu Shaoqi on February 6, 1950, representing Mao's views on the jailing and prosecution of Japanese BW criminals. It reads:

On February 1, Soviet embassies in Washington, London, and Beijing transmitted a letter to the three respective governments of the United States, Britain, and China on the pretense of (*ceng yi zhaokai*) imprisoning and having an international military tribunal for the five big Japanese bacteriological weapons war criminals. I assume our Foreign Ministry has already received this information, so it should immediately publish the complete document on the front page of every Chinese newspaper (*quan guo shou ye fa biao*).

Under Vice Foreign Minister Li Kenong's name, immediately write a response, representing the PRC Central Government's complete agreement with the suggestion provided by the government of the Soviet Union. Recall that according to the April 3, 1946 resolution of the Far Eastern Committee, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East should have aimed not just to jail but prosecute the five big Japanese bacteriological weapons war criminals; it must be recommended in future meetings of the International Military Tribunal that China will be represented only by the Central People's Government of the PRC Central Government. Absolutely no Jiang Jieshi representation will be tolerated, as he and his counterrevolutionary group have already lost their rights.

⁴⁰ "Xiebayefu Regarding the Matter of Arrangements for a Chinese Communist Delegation to Visit the Soviet Union and a Memorandum of Talks with Liu Shaoqi," Feb. 6, 1950, ABIPФ[Russian Presidential Archive], ф.0100, оп.43, п.302, л.10, л.60-61.

At the same time, in [Li Kenong's] response letter, you should praise the Khabarovsk Military Court from December 25th to 30th, 1949 for presenting such credible and just achievements, and reveal the anger present in the Chinese people who personally (*qin shao*) experienced family deaths because of the bacteriological weapons of the fascist enemy. This will increase appreciation for our Soviet friends. Conversely, the letter should warn the world countries' governments which have the heart to protect and revive (*cun xin fu zhi*) Japanese imperialism in preparations for a new World War. They should be warned that only unjust governments will refuse the righteous call of the Soviet Union and continue to protect the number-one guilty poison perpetrator of massacring humanity (*zui e sha ren*), the head of the war criminals, Japanese Emperor Hirohito.

After the strategy of this first draft response letter is complete, immediately show it to the Center [*zhongyang*, e.g., the Central Committee]. At the same time, you should send copies of those letters to British and American governments, and those nations on the Far Eastern Committee. In order to cooperate with the Soviet letter and the Chinese answer, Xinhua should publish an editorial.⁴¹

Zhou's statement that the editorial should "reveal the anger present in the Chinese people who personally (*qin shao*) experienced family deaths because of the bacteriological weapons of the fascist enemy" is quite interesting, as is the consequent to this antecedent: "This will increase appreciation for our Soviet friends." Nowhere in the documents is it stated more nakedly than at this moment: the CCP was using anti-Japanese sentiment to drive the Chinese people into the arms of the Soviet Union.

Mao's comments on this matter are unknown; certainly nothing has appeared in the known archives or his published manuscripts. However, the terseness of the above memo, and the directive to have it passed through the Mao's hands shows that the issue was

⁴¹ Quoted in Liu Shaoqi *Wengao*, p. 487. "Telegraph to Mao Zedong Regarding the Situation of the Negotiation and Signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty," February 9 and 14, 1950. See also "Soviet government delivers a note to our government with a proposal to set up an international court to try all classes of Japanese bacteriological weapons criminals", *Renmin Ribao*, Feb. 5, 1950, p. 1.

regarded as important and worthy of being reviewed closely and controlled. The document likewise makes evident the specific desire of the CCP leadership to utilize the trial to stimulate anti-Japanese feeling in hopes of convincing the Chinese people of the benefits of Soviet friendship. It also shows Zhou's toughness. The Soviet note of February 5 was serving its purpose.⁴²

Now that direction had been given from the highest levels and the Khabarovsk verdict seen as more than a simple top-down propaganda campaign, the ministries became more active. The Central Ministry of Health was an active participant and the prime mover for the internal discussions in China, but the Foreign Ministry, once it understood the ability they had to move international dialogue during the negotiations, took the impetus in the person of Vice-Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu, an experienced cadre who made his imprint on events. The main center of research regarding prior Japanese BW crimes in China (and later the front lines in the preventative health campaigns of 1952-1953) was the *Weishengbu*, or Health Bureau. Press commentaries stimulated further actions within the government, and an "urgent" meeting was called as a result. In this meeting, several departments would be represented, including Health, Public Security, Political Affairs (*zhengzhibu*), and News. Clearly the problem was one for which many departments of the Central Government

⁴² It also appears likely that the negotiations for how to handle the war crimes issue were done in Beijing with Liu Shaoqi as the point person. It appears likely that this was done so as to facilitate rapid activation of Xinhua, which was not a part of Mao's delegation, and to get the most rapid publicity for various directives from Moscow. Because "anti-Japanese propaganda" is a frequent accusation thrown at the CCP, it may be useful to divine which members of the CCP hierarchy were pushing for public attention to the BW issue. Understanding this would give readers a more nuanced and variegated look at how the less-than-monolithic CCP approaches the issue of anti-Japanese nationalism more generally.

required mobilization and activation.⁴³ Direction from Moscow had led to a more comprehensive discussion of the problem, and at a rapid pace. Mao and Zhou in Moscow could be assured that the administration they had left behind was functioning smoothly in their absence. In agreeing to meet with Foreign Ministry colleagues, the Health Ministry officials stated that purpose of their meeting was to “discuss question of past bacteriological warfare atrocities (过去所举行的细菌战争问题).” Zhang Hanfu requested that three of his Foreign Ministry comrades attend: they were Yang Gang (杨岗), Qiao Guanhua (乔冠华) and Wen Jianfeng.⁴⁴ The topic of the meeting encompassed discussion of the Japanese atrocities, but also raised several implications for the future handling of BW issues.⁴⁵ The meeting concluded with a resolution to continue study of the impact of Japanese BW research in China, and a determined declaration to inform the people of the Japanese crimes.⁴⁶

⁴³ Foreign Ministry, “为讨论搜集日细菌战犯,” MFA Archive, 105-00076-02, 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料, p. 21.

⁴⁴ “Note from Central Health Ministry to Foreign Ministry,” Feb. 1950, MFA Archive, 105-00076-02, 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料 p. 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ For first-hand account of the meeting, see Wen Jianfeng, “Report on Participating Discussions at Meeting Convened by Central Health Ministry Regarding Japanese Biological Weapons War Crimes,” Feb. 9, 1950. MFA Archives, 105-00076-02, p. 15. A few excerpts from the meeting proceedings were published the next day by Xinhua. See “Evidence Materials of Unit 731 Bacteriological Weapons Atrocities,” MFA Archives, 105-00076-03, 2.1.1950, pp. 60-62.

The Department of Health was vigorously involved in the case; their documents show some anger. “Don’t be the slaves of the war criminals!” they admonished. “All the scientist workers are united to protect the Soviet suggestion of organizing a special military tribunal.” Liu Shaoqi went so far as to send the Waijiaobu report to Zhou and Mao in Moscow in 1950 for comment.⁴⁷ The February 9 meeting was significant for many reasons. First, decisions had to be made quickly as Mao was in Moscow and the pending pact lent some urgency to events. The meeting presaged very intensive steps to data collection on BW issues, but more importantly placed the investigations in the context of the developing Sino-Soviet relationship—squaring off against the Jiang regime and the United States. The report by one of the meeting’s 40 participants gives more detail on the Feb. 9 meeting, led by Health Department Minister Li Dequan. The report attacks the Guomindang government for their silence and ineffectiveness when dealing with the effects of Japanese BW in China, and Li Dequan proclaimed her support for Soviet demands that Hirohito and other Japanese participants in the BW program be indicted and handed over to the proper authorities (USSR most likely). While focusing on the evils of Japan’s BW program, the final report really announces solidarity with the Soviet Union.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Liu Shaoqi *Wengao*. See also “Discussion Notes On the Problem of Prosecuting Japanese BW War Criminals,” MFA Archives, 105-00092-01, Feb. 9, 1950, 14 pages.

⁴⁸ 105=00076-02, p. [15] Wen Jianfeng, Report on Participating Discussions at Meeting Convened by Central Health Ministry Regarding Japanese Biological Weapons War Crimes, Feb. 9, 1950. [温剑风, “参加中央卫生部召开关于日本战犯细菌战争座谈会的报告”].

The February 9th meeting spurred mass meetings all across China to focus on the BW-Japan issue, and to support the Soviet suggestion, and by extension the Soviet Union.⁴⁹

In the days surrounding the Health Ministry meeting, the BW issue had achieved considerable prominence in the Chinese news media. On February 11, the *Renmin Ribao* published a number of articles centering upon the existence of Japanese BW crimes in China.⁵⁰ On February 12, the *Renmin Ribao* accelerated the theme, publishing another exposé on Japanese bacteriological warfare research in Manchuria, emphasized by a front page cartoon about Japanese BW crimes in southern China entitled “Protecting from Disease, Destroying the Rat.”⁵¹ The cartoon showed a gauntly sick man prostrate in a hospital bed, representing “Zhejiang’s Wenzhou and Guangdong’s Liaohan and other areas after contracting mice plague.” Their sickness has not been solved, making the cartoon a problematic representation of a weak China. However, two men in white masks of indeterminate nationality (either Chinese or Russians) shoo away the dirty mice and one

⁴⁹ MFA # 105-00076-02, p. [15] Wen Jianfeng, Report on Participating Discussions at Meeting Convened by Central Health Ministry Regarding Japanese Biological Weapons War Crimes, Feb. 9, 1950. [温剑风, “参加中央卫生部召开关于日本战犯细菌战争座谈会的报告”].

⁵⁰ “Expert Chemist Gives Verdict: Organization of Japanese Devils in Changde (Hunan) Spread Pestilence with the Goal of Spreading Bacteriologicals into Agricultural Areas,” “Health Department Invites Experts to Give a Talk Verifying the Occurrence of Biological Warfare Acts in China,” *Renmin Ribao*, February 11, 1950.

⁵¹ The cartoon was buttressed by adjacent articles by the Northeast Health Department (Dongbei Weishengbu) on prevention efforts and another on plague problems in the area of Pingfan which had served as Unit 731’s base of operation.

immense rat from their sick patient. This fanged rat, clad in Japanese clogs and Pu Yi-style spectacles, carries two bloody test tubes, his immense hairy tail unhooking from the patient's bed. If the two doctors are mysterious in origin, the cartoonist leaves no doubt about the leading rat, labeling it as "Japanese Emperor Hirohito and other BW ~~war~~ criminals." Only the wide reach of Chinese patriots and Soviet modernity could scare away the Japanese disease and bring balance to Chinese cities stunted by plague. Such images also justified the importation of Soviet doctors into Chinese cities. The main accompanying story in the *Renmin Ribao* on February 12 was entitled "Records of Investigation of Bacteriological Weapons Factory Left by the Japanese Devils in Pingfan; Survey by Officials Zhong Lun and Gui Lian." Photo captions of Pingfan were juxtaposed with the triumphs of "August 15th" noting in the caption that "At the time of Japanese capitulation, the Japanese dual-use airplane bombed their own bacteriological weapons factory...This is further evidence to show that Soviets were correct in their prosecution of crimes around Harbin." Noting that June 1946 had witnessed much death from rat-borne diseases in the area around Pingfang, the CCP pictured a dead body in a casket, mirroring almost precisely the layout of a famous picture of the Soviet-slain GMD engineer, Zhang Xinfu, in 1946.⁵² Simply, the source of China's rat problem could be traced to Tokyo and the imperial throne via Harbin.

When Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai signed the alliance in Moscow on February 14, 1950, the *People's Daily* published the alliance and related agreements immediately and in full

⁵² See *China Weekly Review*, Mar. 2, 1946; Susanne Pepper, *Civil War in China*, pp. 212-215. ; Jiang Pei, "Yijiu siji nian chun fan su yun dong shu ping" in *Zhonghua minguo shi xinlun: zhengzhi, zhongwai guanxi, renwu juan*. ["Critique of the Spring 1946 Anti-Soviet Movement," in *New Theory of the History of the Republic of China: Politics, Foreign Relations, Personal*] (Beijing: Xinzhi Sanlian shudian, 2003).

and trumpeted the benefits of defense against Japan. The text of the alliance deterred “the revival of Japanese imperialism and the resumption of aggression on the part of Japan or any other state” that may collaborate with Japan.⁵³ The treaty’s call for defense against Japan vindicated popular opinion dissatisfied with the American occupation policies and skeptical of Soviet intentions.

On this triumphant day, the Khabarovsk trials returned to the *People’s Daily* and their discussion of Japanese human experiments. Grisly imagery accompanied an article entitled “We Were Used as Experiments for Cold-Weather Wounds.”⁵⁴ As the Soviet model pointed the way toward a future society based on communism, China was being encouraged to look back to the past, gathering evidence of Japanese crimes. The Sino-Soviet Alliance, it was implied, would prevent further recurrence of such gruesome atrocities, yet it also gave the appearance that the very power which enabled China’s opening path to modernity was unable to steer the country clear of the wounds of colonialism. The Alliance’s emphasis on defense versus countries allied with Japan was noticed in the West, but the bacteriological weapons allegation gained little purchase.

In the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet alliance, BW rhetoric on the mainland would not slacken. Public meetings would be held of workers and women, and a traveling exhibition of BW evidence would tour the country. In the Northeast, debates would continue through 1951 about the meaning of the “factories of death,” with the commemorators of BW crimes winning a battle and keeping the site intact.

⁵³ *Renmin Ribao*, Feb. 15, 1950.

⁵⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, Feb. 15, 1950.

Mobilizing Against BW after the Sino-Soviet Alliance

With the signing of the Sino-Soviet pact, the Soviet Union eased off for several months from its urging China to go public with Japanese atrocities. However, the machinery of Chinese government had been primed to investigate and publicize, and as the government began to grow in confidence, these activities expanded rapidly. The Khabarovsk trials stimulated a nationwide discourse on bacteriological weapons in China. Not only were local governments encouraged to collect as much evidence as possible of Japanese atrocities, the Central Ministry of Health actively took the propaganda campaign on the road, publicizing Japan's crimes in hopes of stimulating more reports from local governments.

In the period just prior to and after the signing of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, the city of Beijing was the site of two large public meetings about Japanese BW atrocities. The Health Ministry recorded the proceedings of these two rallies at the Temple of Heaven in the southern section of Beijing. As a suspected site of Japanese BW use, the location was key to simultaneously establishing the veracity of Japanese BW crimes and the firm resolve not to see such crimes repeated. The drive for public hygiene in the crowded city also played a role in the meetings. On Jan. 14, 1950, a group of workers (including many "female comrades") gathered in the district for the meeting about Japanese BW where they were asked to describe the crimes.⁵⁵ The evidence collected at the January 14, 1950 meeting was

⁵⁵ MFA Document# 105-00092-06, 天坛防病处工人座谈日军占据时的情形整理记录, Tiantan fangbingchu gongren zuotan Rijun zhanjushi de qingshili jilu, "Record of Temple of Heaven Disease

fed to the Central Health Ministry which synthesized the allegations and passed them on to the Foreign Ministry for use in international propaganda. These Beijing allegations were sufficiently important to be placed first on the agenda for the Health Ministry's February 9 meeting.⁵⁶ At the Foreign Ministry meeting of the same day, the results of the Temple of Heaven meetings are cited as incontrovertible evidence of Japan's production of BW.⁵⁷ The second meeting at the Temple of Heaven district, on Feb. 16th, 1950, reinforced similar themes.

In their summary of the Khabarovsk trials, the State Council emphasized how the trials had "verified Japanese Emperor Hirohito's leadership in the former ruling clique's many years of secret preparations for bacteriological warfare." In a slight twist on previous discussions, the State Council described the Japanese as "completely and brutally in violation of the laws and conventions of war, especially in relation to the June 17, 1925, Geneva treaty prohibiting use of bacteriological weapons." The document then goes on to summarize the diplomatic results of the Khabarovsk trials, beginning with the Soviet note of

Prevention Office Convening a Discussion of Workers about the Situation during the Period of Japanese Military Occupation," March 7, 1950. [pp. 8-9.]

⁵⁶ Memorandum from Health Ministry to Foreign Ministry, "Collection of Evidence/Experience of Japanese Biological Weapons Criminal Activity" (事由: 搜集日本细菌战犯罪行为证据经过), no date, MFA #105-00076-02, 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料, p. 14.

⁵⁷ "Summary of Meeting Minutes for an Informal Discussion Concerning the Problem of Punishing/Prosecuting Japanese Biological War Criminals," 关于惩办日本细菌战犯问题座谈会纪要 1950.2.9, MFA # 105-00092-01, p. 13.

February 1 which “suggested the establishment of a special international military tribunal which would report on guilty persons’ crimes against humanity – and hand over Japanese Emperor Hirohito to the above mentioned court for trial.” The State Council was aware, however, that neither the U.S. nor Great Britain had responded to this rather radical request by the USSR.

Having set the international context, the State Council document turns to action within the PRC Central Government which had been prompted by these events. The two primary meetings about BW were the Feb. 9 Health Ministry meeting; the other was a March 3, 1950 meeting at the Foreign Ministry . The State Council document sought to synthesize the results from these respective meetings in order to “reach conclusions on the means of handling a few matters”:

1. Using the [February 9th] forum’s name, send out a telegram supporting the Soviet suggestion to have a trial for Japanese Emperor Hirohito and other guilty criminals. This will simultaneously require heightened vigilance of the Chinese people and the people of the whole world against the murderous bacteriological weapons. (This telegraph [can be] drafted by the Central Health Ministry.)
- 2 .Combine [international] with domestic aspects to investigate the atrocities of the Japanese bacteriological war crimes in China. This work can be done by related Ministries that will aid the Health Ministry in the collection of materials. Past Health Ministry collections of [BW] materials have already scored great achievements; seen as propaganda materials, they have already had ample use. Other offices can yet be engaged in helping from all sides. With regard to the courts, their most important mission is to, from the standpoint of laws, conduct research synthesizing the collected materials, producing analysis of that most powerful evidence.
3. As to international propaganda work, this ought to be the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry.

The State Council’s prescription for further work in propaganda indicates real awareness in the top echelons of the CCP toward the international implications of bringing forward atrocities of Japanese war criminals. [further analysis] In its concluding “summary of

experience,” the State Council laid out a self-criticism. Several aspects are worthy of comment, but the most fascinating aspect of what follows is the idea of *Soviet-inspired Chinese consciousness* of Japanese war crimes.

(3) Summary of Experience:

1. In the process of handling this task, we felt that our past attitudes toward the enemy conspiracies had been too common, that our knowledge of [these conspiracies] was still insufficient, that through our brother country of the Soviet Union taking the lead in advancing the problem of the bacteriological crimes, [we could realize] that in fact the Japanese had inflicted powerful injuries upon our people. Now as a result of capable investigation we know how the Japanese in Beijing, Suzhou, Zhenjiang, Datong and all other places cultivated the most powerfully virulent poisons. This will cause us to heighten our spirit of vigilance against the invisible enemies [kanbujian de diren].

2. We should again augment international propaganda work. For instance, this case [of BW crimes] has connections of considerable importance. Right now American imperialism is reviving Japan, and if we have a plan, we can expose to the Japanese people the despicable conduct of the blindly-worshipped imperial system, using [this propaganda] to raise the consciousness of the Japanese people. We must seize this time to expose the conspiracies of the Japanese invaders.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ MFA # 105-00076-02, 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料, Feb. 9, 1950, p. 16-19.

In the aftermath of these public meetings, on March 7, the Beijing Temple of Heaven Epidemic Prevention Department had a meeting with nearly twenty people, most of whom were leaders among the city's laborers. They reviewed in detail the BW activities of the Japanese in the city of Beijing. Although the document in the Foreign Ministry Archive does not indicate how this news was to be spread, it follows that factories would be the next step in the propagandization process.⁵⁹

A March 1950 exhibition explained more to mass people about the BW crimes. The criticism, a summary of collective departmental impressions and criticism, is quite revealing. They criticized the exhibition as lacking in documentary richness, as “unsystematic and somewhat messy” showing that the nascent [limited] reach of the propaganda apparatus in the period was hampering the campaign. It also showed, more importantly, the half-developed state of China's evidentiary case against Japan's BW crimes – just as the nation was only now being pieced together, so was the puzzle of the BW experimentation in Pingfan and elsewhere. The exhibition's discourse on a scientific level also was troubling to the administrator, who saw the “explanations of the spread and harm of plague and the infectivity of the various bacteria” as being inadequate and the statistics too few. The lack of statistics and scientific lingo likely resulted from the lack of technical training among the propagandists. However, it is just as likely that a populace largely removed from scientific terminology of the educated elite would have found a difficult time digesting such an exhibit when many schools were just reopening after years of dislocation and warfare. Finally, the

⁵⁹ "一九五二年卫生工作总结报告" [a report summarizing the hygiene work during the year 1952], 北京市政档案, 中国 [Beijing Municipal Archives, China]

critiques of the exhibit reinforce the political intent of the exhibit – its purpose was not so much to demand justice from Japan, but to point out how the Soviet Union disciplined those BW criminals in its custody in direct contrast to those “set free by the American Imperialism.” Yet, if the exhibition served its purpose of allowing the Chinese people to “experience Japanese bacteria war criminals’ slaughter in person,” it would indeed stimulate “greater hatred towards war criminals.” With a few minor adjustments, administrators noted, the exhibition could be expanded to cities across China.⁶⁰ In April 1950, the exhibition moved to Hunan, where it met with more criticism from provincial party bureaucracies on similar grounds. The Foreign Ministry fielded the complaints, but the exhibition continued on its swing through the south.⁶¹

As the exhibition was stimulating public consciousness of Japan’s crimes, internal debates continued over the best means of handling an ongoing commemoration of, and research about, the crimes of Unit 731. The major players here were the Northeast Industry Committee and the Northeast Weishengbu. In discussions, Weishengbu showed their sincere interest in preventing future outbreaks of plague and other diseases hatched from Ishii’s test tubes. However, industrialization came to a fascinating point of conflict with the process of popular memory. In spring 1950, the Harbin Weishengbu received a note from

⁶⁰ MFA Document # 105-00076-02 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料; [p. 51] Human Affairs Office [人事处] to Foreign Ministry regarding “A Few Opinions after Our Ministry Attended the ‘Evidence of Japanese Biological War Crimes Testimonial Exhibition,’” March 5, 1950.

⁶¹ 105-00076-02 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料; [p. 50] April 8, 1950

the Asian division of the Foreign Ministry relaying a debate that had been ongoing between the Foreign Ministry and the Northeast People's Government Weishengbu (the supervisors of the Harbin unit). The debate centered around the future of the Unit 731 facilities at Pingfan, south of Harbin.⁶²

On August 8, as China began to mobilize for the Korean War, a national exhibition occurred in Beijing on the anti-BW theme. Mei Ru'ao, who had represented China at the Tokyo Trials and a prominent "third party" voice, sent a note to the Foreign Ministry about the exhibition. Mei Ru'ao was best known for having represented the Republic of China at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo.[repeats] As one of the most prominent men of the Republican period to be involved in the justice of Japanese war criminals, his involvement in the anti-BW campaign could be quite useful, both internationally and domestically. On the international level, Mei could be seen as representing the PRC's links to the legitimacy of the Tokyo Trials, an ongoing goal of Zhou Enlai's which he had initially expressed in his February 6 note to Zhou Enlai. Domestically, Mei was precisely the type of cultivated "middle force" of intellectual that the Party was wooing with anti-Japanese nationalism in the transitional year after taking power. Mei, perhaps trying to curry political favor with the new administration, noted how pleased he was with the exhibition. From his standpoint of international law, however, Mei suggested

⁶² Asian Division of Waijiaobu to Harbin Weishengbu, Foreign Ministry Archives, File # 105-00076-02, pp. 84-85. See also MFA #105-00107-01.

cryptically that the exhibition would not cause a diplomatic incident or “international entanglement”.⁶³

With reference to the exhibition, Li Dequan’s note to Zhou Enlai, Zhang Hanfu, and Vice Foreign Minister Li stated that “Pieces of evidence from the exhibition can be of use in the meeting on foreign affairs policy.” The “close attention[慎重]” that Li recommended was accepted immediately by the Foreign Affairs bureaucracy. Accordingly, Vice Foreign Minister Wang adds that the Asian Affairs (Pacific Department) office would send a person to participate in the meeting/exhibition, agreeing with Li’s comment that the exhibition’s concern with foreign policy (that is to say, foreign propaganda) merited Foreign Ministry input.⁶⁴ Individuals contributed articles relaying their first-hand accounts of Unit 731 atrocities. The Weishengbu were extremely active in soliciting these pieces. More than simply putting their ideas into print, the Weishengbu reached ever-wider audiences in the spring of 1950 by organizing community meetings to discuss the meaning of the BW atrocities, the need to prevent future outbreaks, and promote patriotic education.

Conclusion

Maybe [fewer maybes] the mobilization around the Khabarovsk Trials and Japanese BW began as a PR campaign for the Sino-Soviet alliance, but (especially considering later events) it seems to have expanded even in the two months after the trials. Maybe the CCP

⁶³ MFA #105-00076-02, p. 52, Mei Ru’ao, “Letter Regarding National Sanitation Exhibit ‘Biological War Criminals,’” August 8, 1950.

⁶⁴ Li Dequan, regarding Exhibition of Japanese Biological War Crimes Evidence, MFA Document# 105-00076-02, 关于搜集日本细菌战犯罪行的材料 p. 53.

realized what a great mass mobilization campaign complaining about Japanese atrocities was to help to solidify public support for the new regime, not just the Sino-Soviet alliance. The Khabarovsk trials and subsequent Soviet actions in February 1950 were not carried out with Chinese input, but they nevertheless stimulated public attention to, and vigorous internal debate about, the threat of Japanese bacteriological weapons. For the public, the news from Khabarovsk and the Soviet pledge thereafter to try Hirohito in an international court were a means through which Chinese patriotism could be linked to an ally whose past actions had not always been helpful to China. Perhaps more importantly from the point of view of an analysis of the masses, the stimulation of anti-Japanese consciousness by the Soviets coincided with the advent of the 1950s and was entwined rapidly thereafter with the emerging PRC national identity and peculiar nationalism. For the Chinese government, the Soviet actions brought new momentum to local health campaigns who sought to gather all available data about Japanese BW crimes on the mainland, and were a boon. By the same token, the ongoing BW discourse went on unceasingly right up until the allegations against the US/UN forces of using BW on Manchuria and Korean battlefields in spring 1952, adding another Japanese element into the Cold War narrative. The Soviet Union is long dead, but the seeds it planted in China and its evidence of Japanese BW are still eagerly watered by the CCP. the Khabarovsk testimony is reprinted by the PLA Publishing House now, and sold in many state and private bookstores to Chinese readers today who are eager to learn more aspects of Japanese BW research program in China. A purely historical analysis of the outgrowth of the Khabarovsk trials would indicate that caution would be the best attitude with which to handle such a source.

