Modern History Sourcebook: The Nanking Massacre, 1937

The Japanese occupation of Nanking, the capital of the Republic of China, lead to one of the greatest horrors of the century. This eyewitness report was filed by a New York Times reporter.

Aboard the U.S.S. Oahu at Shanghai, Dec. 17 [1937].
Through wholesale atrocities and vandalism at Nanking the Japanese Army has thrown away a rare opportunity to gain the respect and confidence of the Chinese inhabitants and of foreign opinion there....

The killing of civilians was widespread. Foreigners who traveled widely through the city Wednesday found civilian dead on every street. Some of the victims were aged men, women and children.

Policemen and firemen were special objects of attack. Many victims were bayoneted and some of the wounds were barbarously cruel.

Any person who ran because of fear or excitement was likely to be killed on the spot as was any one caught by roving patrols in streets or alleys after dark. Many slayings were witnessed by foreigners.

The Japanese looting amounted almost to plundering of the entire city. Nearly every building was entered by Japanese soldiers, often under the eyes of their officers, and the men took whatever they wanted. The Japanese soldiers often impressed Chinese to carry their loot....

The mass executions of war prisoners added to the horrors the Japanese brought to Nanking. After killing the Chinese soldiers who threw down their arms and surrendered, the Japanese combed the city for men in civilian garb who were suspected of being former soldiers.

In one building in the refugee zone 400 men were seized. They were marched off, tied in batches of fifty, between lines of riflemen and machine gunners, to the execution ground.

Just before boarding the ship for Shanghai the writer watched the execution of 200 men on the Bund [dike]. The killings took ten minutes. The men were lined against a wall and shot. Then a number of Japanese, armed with pistols, trod nonchalantly around the crumpled bodies, pumping bullets into any that were still kicking.

The army men performing the gruesome job had invited navy men from the warships anchored off the Bund to view the scene. A large group of military spectators apparently greatly enjoyed the spectacle.

When the first column of Japanese troops marched from the South Gate up Chungshan Road toward the city's Big Circle, small knots of Chinese civilians broke into scattering cheers, so great was their relief that the siege was over and so high were their hopes that the Japanese would restore peace and order. There are no cheers in Nanking now for the Japanese.

The capture of Hsiakwan Gate by the Japanese was accompanied by the mass killing of the defenders, who were piled up among the sandbags, forming a mound six feet high. Late Wednesday the Japanese had not removed the dead, and two days of heavy military traffic had been passing through, grinding over the remains of men, dogs and horses.

The Japanese appear to want the horrors to remain as long as possible, to impress on the Chinese the terrible results of resisting Japan.

Chungahan Road was a long avenue of filth and discarded uniforms, rifles, pistols, machine guns, fieldpieces, knives and knapsacks. In some places the Japanese had to hitch tanks to debris to clear the road.

From F. Tillman, "All Captives Slain," *The New York Times*, December 18, 1937, pp. 1, 10.

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Nanking Massacre

also called RAPE OF NANKING (December 1937-January 1938), mass killing and ravaging of Chinese citizens and capitulated soldiers by soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army after its seizure of Nanking, China, on Dec. 13, 1937, during the Sino-Japanese War that preceded World War II. The number of Chinese killed in the massacre has been subject to much debate, with most estimates ranging from 100,000 to more than 300,000.

The destruction of Nanking--which had been the capital of the Nationalist Chinese from 1928 to 1937--was ordered by Matsui Iwane, commanding general of the Central China Front Army that captured the city. Over the next several weeks, Japanese soldiers carried out Matsui's orders, perpetrating numerous mass executions and tens of thousands of rapes. The army looted and burned the surrounding towns and the city, destroying more than a third of the buildings. In 1940 the Japanese made Nanking the capital of their Chinese puppet government headed by Wang Ching-wei. Shortly after the end of World War II, Matsui and Tani Hisao, a lieutenant general who had personally participated in acts of murder and rape, were found guilty of war crimes by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and executed.

READ THE *NANKING MASSACRE* AND *MODERN HISTORY SOURCE BOOK THE NANKING MASSACRE,* THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTINS.

1. WHAT WAS NANKING TO THE NATIONALISTS? _____
WHO WAS THE LEADER OF THE NATIONALISTS?_____
2. DEFINE (*ATROCITY*), USE A DICTIONARY _____
_____
3. WHEN DID THIS EVENT OCCUR? (NAME THE WAR) _____
4. LIST FOUR "WAR CRIMES" COMMITTED BY THE JAPANESE.
_____ _____
_____ _____
5. WHY DID THE JAPANESE USE TERROR TACTICS?_____
_____
6. LIST TWO SPECIFIC GROUPS SINGLED OUT BY THE JAPANESE IN NANKING. _____ & _____
7. WHAT HAPPENED TO CHINESE SOLDIERS THAT SURRENDERED?
_____
8. WHAT HAPPENED TO ANYONE WHO TIRED TO RUN AWAY?
_____
9. WHO RAN THE ONLY OPEN HOSPITAL IN NANKING?_____
10. WHAT HAPPENED TO DEAD BODIES OF MEN, DOGS, AND HORSES IF THEY DIED ON ROADS? _____
_____

Bataan Death March

Bataan Death March,

forced march of 70,000 American and Filipino prisoners of war captured by the Japanese in the Philippines in the early stages of World War II. Starting out from Mariveles, on the southern end of the Bataan Peninsula, on April 9, 1942, they were force-marched 55 miles (88 km) to San Fernando, then taken by rail to Capas, from where they walked the final 8 miles (13 km) to Camp O'Donnell. They were starved and mistreated, often kicked or beaten on their way, and many who fell were bayoneted. Only 54,000 reached the camp; 7,000-10,000 died on the way and the rest escaped to the jungle.

After the war, the Japanese commander of the invasion forces in the Philippines, Lieutenant General Homma Masaharu, was charged with responsibility for the death march and was tried by a U.S. military commission in Manila in January-February 1946. Convicted, he was executed on April 3.

READ THE ABOVE DOCUMENT, THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. **WHERE IS BATAAN?**_____
2. **THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF BATAAN IS WHAT GEOGRAPHICALLY?**_____
3. **IN WHAT WAR DID THIS EVENT TAKE PLACE?**_____
4. **WHO WERE THE PRISONERS OF WAR IN THIS EVENT?**
   _____ **&** _____
5. **WHO MANY PRISONERS OF WAR TOOK THIS TRIP?**_____
   HOW MANY DIED ON THIS TRIP? _____
6. **WHO KILLED THE POWS?** _____
   METHODS USE TO KILL THE PRISONERS OF WAR
   _____ **&** _____
7. **WHO WAS HOMMA MASAHARU?** _____
8. **WHAT HAPPENED TO HOMMA MASAHARU?**_____
   _____

READ THE DOCUMENT "*DEATH MARCH*" THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.....

1. USE A DICTIONARY AND LOOK UP (PRIMARY SOURCE)_____

_____

2. THIS DOCUMENT IS AN EXAMPLE OF A LETTER, PICTURE, TELEGRAM, POEM, OR A REPORT, CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE ANSWERS.
3. IS THIS DOCUMENT A PRIMARY SOURCE? _____
   DISCUSS YOUR ANSWER_____

_____

4. WHO WROTE THIS DOCUMENT? _____
5 WHAT WAS GOING ON IN WORLD HISTORY WHEN THIS DOCUMENT WAS CREATED? _____
6. WHERE DID THIS "DEATH MARCH" TAKE PLACE? _____
7. WHO ARE THE MARCHERS IN THIS PICTURE? _____
8. WHO PROBABLY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING THE PHOTOGRAPH?

_____

9. LIST TWO FEELINGS BEING EXPRESSED BY THE AUTHOR IN THIS DOCUMENT _____
   & _____
10. WRITE A QUESTION TO THE AUTHOR THAT IS LEFT UNANSWERED BY THE DOCUMENT._____

_____

_____

_____

DEATH MARCH

So you are dead. The easy words contain

No sense of loss, no sorrow, no despair.

Thus hunger, thirst, fatigue, combine to drain

All feeling from our hearts. The endless glare,

The brutal heat, anesthetize the mind.

I can not mourn you now. I lift my load,

The suffering column moves. I leave behind

Only another corpse, beside the road."

Lt. Henry G. Lee...A Soldier Poet.

READ THE DOCUMENT *"HIROHITO: LAST OF THE* WWII *GIANTS"*, THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS DOCUMENT?_____

2. WHEN DID HIROHITO TAKE THE THRONE?_____

3. WHAT DOES HIROHITO DO FOR RELAXATION? _____

_____

4. WHAT IS THE EMPEROR AN EXPERT ON? _____

5. DEFINE DYNASTY? _____

_____

6. ACCORDING TO THIS DOCUMENT, HOW OLD IS THE JAPANESE DYNASTY?

_____

7. WHAT DID THE EMPEROR THINK OF THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR? _____

_____

8. AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II WHO WAS CONSIDERED THE AMERICAN SHOGUN? _____

9. WHAT DID THE EMPEROR SAY TO THE U.S. SHOGUN? (REGARDING WWII)

_____

10. IS HIROHITO ALIVE TODAY? _____

Hirohito: Last of WWII Giants

WASHINGTON — When Emperor Hirohito steps out on the balcony of his palace in downtown Tokyo this Sunday to greet thousands of adoring Japanese on his 83rd birthday, there'll be a CIA agent in the crowd — probably armed with binoculars.

There have been recent hints that the diminutive emperor's health is failing.

My associate Dale Van Atta, who was recently in Tokyo, has had access to some of the secret CIA profiles of the emperor. The CIA's remorseless analysts hold this aged, bespectacled little man in awe. "Despite all he has been through since he assumed the throne in 1926," notes the CIA, "Emperor Hirohito projects innocence and sincerity." The CIA describes him as "a shy, retiring man."

He and his 81-year-old empress like to watch soap operas on TV and putter in the gardens. "Both the emperor and empress (enjoy pursuing) their personal interests — marine biology and botany for the emperor, art for the empress," states another profile, this one stamped "Confidential." In fact, Hirohito is the world's chief authority on jellyfish and related creatures, with 16 books to his credit.

ALTHOUGH IT COSTS more than $40 million a year to maintain the imperial household, the CIA notes that "most 'Japanese still view the emperor with considerable respect and affection."

At first, the Japanese had "grave doubts about the image the emperor would project" in the United States. But his reception during his 1975 visit to this country "greatly exceeded even the most optimistic Japanese expectations."

The CIA believes the visit contributed "significantly to popular (Japanese) support for continued cooperation with the U.S. (and) opening an era of 'good feelings' in U.S.-Japanese relations."

Characteristically, Hirohito expressed his approval of America not in words but with a gesture. For years afterward, he wore a Mickey Mouse watch that he picked up in Disneyland.

Hirohito is the 124th emperor in Japan's unbroken, 2,644-year-old imperial line. When he ascended to the throne in 1926, he was a "tenno" — the "emperor of heaven." The Japanese considered him a god.

When the Japanese warlords sought his approval for the attack on Pearl Harbor, according to one account, Hirohito voiced his apparent disapproval by reciting a 31-syllable poem composed by his grandfather, extolling universal brotherhood and asking: "Why, then, do winds and water of conflict... Disturb peace among us?"

The warlords went ahead with their plans anyway, and older Americans will remember Hirohito as a villain in propaganda cartoons, with buck teeth and Coke-bottle eyeglasses — features that took their place with Adolf Hitler's mustache and Hermann Goering's potbelly.

The emperor was able to reverse this image after the war. When the gamble of his generals and admirals turned into humiliating defeat, he first broadcast the news of surrender to his people — the first time most of them had ever heard his voice.

Then he presented himself humbly, top hat in hand, to the new shogun of Japan, Gen. Douglas MacArthur. He told MacArthur he accepted full responsibility for the war that he had actually opposed, and said he was ready to be judged by the American general.

MacArthur was "moved to the very marrow of my bones" by the Japanese emperor's humility. "He was an emperor by birth, but in that instant I knew I faced the First Gentleman of Japan in his own right," MacArthur wrote later.

Today, Hirohito remains the only — and perhaps the unlikeliest — survivor of World War II's leaders.