The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 301
“The Marco Polo Bridge”
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

Upon leaving the capital and traveling ten miles, you come to a river named Pulisangan, which discharges itself into the ocean, and is navigated by many vessels entering from thence, with considerable quantities of merchandise. Over this river there is a very handsome bridge of stone, perhaps unequalled by another in the world…It has twenty-four arches, supported by twenty-five piers erected in the water, all of serpentine stone, and built with great skill…

Marco Polo, *Book of the Marvels of the World,* published *circa* 1300.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 301. The Marco Polo Bridge.

In the previous episode, we got caught up on major developments in China and Japan in the years following Japan’s occupation of Manchuria. In China, Chiang Kai-shek abandoned Manchuria to Japan without a fight and agreed to Japanese demands that China demilitarize a swath of Chinese territory along the border with Manchuria, so that he could concentrate on reining in the warlords and the Communists, much to the dismay and outrage of Chinese nationalists. Then in 1936, Chiang was kidnapped by two unhappy military commanders who had cut a deal with the Communists. Chiang was released in exchange for a promise that the Republic of China would end its military campaigns against the Communists and instead ally with the Communists to resist the Japanese.

Soon after, Communist military units were integrated into the National Army. This cooperation agreement is known to history as the Second United Front. The First United Front was the 1924 alliance between the Nationalists and the Communists to put an end to the warlords, which ended in 1927 when Chiang abruptly purged the Communists from the Nationalist Party and violently suppressed the Communist Party in its stronghold of Shanghai, an event sometimes known as the Shanghai Massacre, which we covered in episode 234.

Given that history, one might question Chiang’s sincerity in joining the Second United Front, but part of the agreement was that the United Front would receive military aid from the Soviet Union, which must have sweetened the deal quite a bit from Chiang’s perspective. The international community had deplored the Japanese occupation in diplomatic statements and the League of Nations had declared Japan the aggressor, which led to the Japanese walking out of the League, but none of this international disapproval had translated into any tangible aid or assistance to China. Now, for the first time, a foreign power, the USSR, was offering to help.

On the Japanese side, we saw the radical military faction known as the Imperial Way attempt to overthrow the government in the 2-26 Incident. Recall that the Imperial Way believed the Soviet Union posed the biggest threat to Japan and advocated what was called the Northern Road strategy; that is, that Japan should look to Siberia and Soviet East Asia for its next territorial gains.

But the 2-26 Incident weakened the Imperial Way faction, even as it strengthened the position of radical nationalists in the military generally. The Great Depression had undermined civilian politicians and political parties, while the Army’s success in seizing and occupying Manchuria had enhanced the prestige of the military, so that by the mid-1930s, governments in Japan were no longer formed by coalitions of political parties but by coalitions made up of factions within the Army and the Navy along with the civilian politicians who supported them.

In June 1937, the Emperor chose the 46-year-old aristocrat Konoe Fumimaro to form a government. We’ve met Konoe before, all the way back in episode 199. Back then, in his twenties, he was part of the Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, and published an essay titled “Reject the Anglo-American-Centered Peace,” which argued that Allied talk of democracy and self-determination was a ruse and that the actual intention of the Allies was to consolidate British, French, and American rule over the world, at the expense of younger powers like Germany and Japan.

This was very much a fringe view in Japanese politics at the time, but by the 1930s, it was mainstream thinking. In 1934, Konoe visited his son Fumitaka, who was a student at Princeton University in the United States, and got a first-hand look at America’s sympathy for China and its rising hostility toward Japan and its imperial ambitions. After returning to Japan, Konoe spoke of American racism and hypocrisy, of America’s monopolization of needed resources, and called for an “international New Deal” that would recognize Japan’s rights as a major power. Upon taking office as prime minister, one of Konoe’s first acts was to seek pardons for the ringleaders of the 2-26 Incident.

I’ll direct your attention now to that demilitarized zone in northeastern China, along the frontier with Japanese-occupied Manchuria. Chiang and the Chinese government had agreed to withdraw Chinese military units from this region, ostensibly to avoid conflict with Japanese military units.

But the agreement also permitted the Japanese to send reconnaissance patrols into the demilitarized zone to confirm Chinese compliance.

And if that isn't humiliating enough for the Chinese, keep in mind that this is on top of the Boxer Protocol, the agreement that ended the Boxer Uprising. Remember the Boxer Uprising? (Episodes 14 and 15.) The Boxer Protocol gave the eight nations of the coalition, including Japan, the right to station troops along the rail line between Tianjin and Beijing. Back in 1900, the Eight-Nation Coalition had to send troops inland along this rail line from the coast to relieve the siege of their embassies in the capital; the Protocol was meant to secure that rail line in the event of a replay of the Boxer Uprising and allow the Coalition nations a protected route into Beijing.

The Japanese took advantage of the Boxer Protocol to station more than ten thousand Japanese soldiers along that rail line, far in excess of what the Protocol allowed. So, never mind what the map says. *De jure,* Japan controlled Manchukuo; between Japanese patrols in the so-called demilitarized zone and Japanese garrisons on the railroad line, the Japanese Army had extended its control *de facto* as far south as that rail line and the very gates of those two important cities: the port of Tianjin and Beijing, now known as Beiping and no longer the capital of China, but still an important city. Japan extended this control as far west as Mongolia, even including China's most famous piece of history, the Great Wall.

You can imagine how a Chinese nationalist would feel about seeing a foreign army in control of the Great Wall, or, if you can't, imagine how an English person would feel about a foreign army occupying the Tower of London. Additionally, Japanese civilian merchants were moving into the demilitarized zone and setting up businesses there, forging economic links between the local Chinese and Japan while assuring those local Chinese they might as well go along with it, since this was the wave of the future.

There is a bridge across the Lugou River about 15 kilometers southwest of downtown Beijing, and this is the very bridge that Marco Polo found so remarkable back in the 13th century, except that it was rebuilt in 1698. Westerners call it the "Marco Polo Bridge," because of its connection to the famed traveler, although the Chinese give it the more prosaic name of the Lugou Bridge.

On the night of July 7, 1937, a Japanese Army unit was patrolling near the bridge when it came under fire. This was not the first incident of its kind by any means. It is widely believed that Communist soldiers, now in the Nationalist Army, engaged in deliberate provocations such as this one in the hope of triggering war with the Japanese occupiers. Some Japanese and Chinese military commanders believed the Communists were provoking a war that they hoped would exhaust both Japan and the Nationalists and lead to a Communist takeover of China, so when an incident like this erupted, commanders on both sides felt an incentive to settle it peacefully.

But not tonight. After the initial exchange of gunfire, the Japanese unit discovered one of their soldiers had gone missing and suspected he had been taken prisoner by the Chinese. So the

Japanese commander demanded the right to cross the Marco Polo Bridge into the Chinese-held fortress town of Wanping and search for their missing man. The Chinese refused, and both sides began sending reinforcements to the bridge.

It turned out the missing Japanese soldier had just gotten lost, and he eventually found his way back to his unit. But the Japanese held to their demand to cross the bridge and enter the town, now ostensibly to investigate who fired on them.

The next day, the two governments negotiated an agreement under which the Japanese would drop the demand to search the fortress in exchange for an apology from the Chinese government and a pledge that the Chinese would investigate the incident and exercise better control over their troops, especially the Communists. Nevertheless, the Japanese War Minister prevailed upon Prime Minister Konoe to reinforce the Japanese Army in the region by sending in a division from Korea, two brigades from Manchuria, and air units to support them.

For a week or so, it seemed the confrontation had been resolved. On July 16, though, the commander of the Japanese forces in China, General Tashiro Kanichiro, died suddenly of heart failure at the age of 55. The stress caused by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident may well have been a contributing factor. His successor, General Katsuki Kiyoshi, took command. He felt his predecessor had been too lax and set to work to “chastise the outrageous Chinese,” as he put it.

On the evening of July 25, a firefight broke out between Chinese and Japanese units in the city of Langfang, which lay about at the midpoint of that railroad line between Beiping and Tianjin. The Japanese sent heavy reinforcements supported by aircraft which bombed a Chinese barracks. By the next morning, Langfang was under Japanese occupation. General Katsuki cabled the Army command in Tokyo and told them he had done everything in his power to keep the peace, to no avail, and requested permission to use force to protect Japanese civilians and their property in China. The Army granted permission and dispatched two more divisions.

Army commanders briefed Prime Minister Konoe and his Cabinet on the escalating conflict in China, assuring them that the Chinese could be brought to heel within three months. The Cabinet approved. How could they not, knowing full well that the Army could and would bring down this government just as it had brought down the previous government, just weeks ago. The Prime Minister told the Diet that Chinese Communists were threatening Japanese interests and Japanese lives and that the military had to intervene to restore order. The Japanese public largely accepted this interpretation of the events in China and supported the military.

No one in Japan, not the public, the Cabinet, or the Army command, realized at the time that Japan had just embarked upon a war that would last not three months, but eight years, and would end only after the combined military might of the world’s leading powers, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union, was brought to bear against Japan, not to mention the horrifying destructive power of the atomic bomb.

[music: Qinxue, “Yangguan Sandie”]

Two days after Prime Minister Konoe announced the offensive in China to the Diet, Japanese Army and Navy forces began a coordinated assault on the port city of Tianjin. Chinese forces in the city were outmatched and were ordered to withdraw.

Less than two weeks later, the Japanese Army marched into Beiping. China’s two most important cities in the region were now lost, and the plains of North China wide open to the Japanese.

On August 9, the same day Beiping fell, a Japanese officer in Shanghai was shot and killed during a confrontation with Chinese police. Remember that a number of foreign powers control concessions in Shanghai and that the city had been the scene of fighting between Chinese and Japanese forces at the time of the occupation of Manchuria in 1932. Since then, a truce had kept the peace between the Chinese and the Japanese, but now that was all over.

China had held off a Japanese effort to occupy the city in 1932; now in 1937, China had the means to send more soldiers into the city faster, and Chiang Kai-shek hoped to use these advantages to bloody the Japanese. China’s best soldiers were sent to fortify Shanghai, and the small Chinese Air Force was deployed to attack Japanese naval targets to prevent Japan landing more troops by sea.

But the lightly armed Chinese units lacked the heavy weapons needed to force the Japanese out of their urban strongholds. The Chinese Air Force was flying Curtiss Hawk biplanes and a few Boeing P-26 “Peashooters,” America’s first all-metal fighter plane. They were outnumbered and up against Japan’s state-of-the-art Mitsubishi A5M carrier-based fighters. But the Chinese pilots were trained and experienced and more than held their own in the early days of combat. I should note that among these Chinese pilots were two Chinese-Americans, John Huang Pan-yang, who had emigrated to the United States at the age of six, and Arthur Chin, born in Portland, Oregon, both of whom had volunteered to serve with the Chinese Air Force.

Unfortunately for the Chinese, the Japanese aircraft industry was able to replace lost Japanese planes far more quickly than China’s modest domestic aircraft industry, and the Chinese air forces were soon beaten back, unable to prevent Japanese troop landings. There followed months of bitter fighting, street by street, building by building, in a conflict that has been compared to what is to come in Stalingrad.

The aerial bombing of densely-populated Shanghai killed thousands of Chinese and a number of foreigners. Photographs of the devastation inflamed international opinion and turned it against Japan. Recall that at this time, aerial bombing of large cities was a new development, regarded with fear and loathing. The Germans had bombed Guernica in Spain just a few months earlier; now the madness had spread to China.

On October 5, US President Franklin Roosevelt, speaking in Chicago and without mentioning any country by name, deplored the killing of civilians in aerial attacks and declared, “Nations claiming freedom for themselves deny it to others. Innocent peoples, innocent nations, are being cruelly sacrificed to a greed for power and supremacy which is devoid of all sense of justice and humane considerations.”

The following day, the League of Nations voted to censure Japan. The following month, the nine signatories to the 1922 Nine-Power Treaty, part of the Washington Naval Conference, episode 224, met in Brussels to discuss the fighting. Japan boycotted the conference. The conference called for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict, but took no stronger action.

The Chinese finally withdrew from Shanghai in early November. Their stiff resistance to the Japanese onslaught had come at a high price, an estimated 180,000 soldiers killed, representing the best trained and best armed units of the Chinese military, along with most of China’s air force and tanks. Chiang Kai-shek threw everything into this battle in the hope of demonstrating to the world that the days were over when the Chinese government was content to sit back and let the Japanese have their way. After years of passivity, some kind of demonstration was required.

Unfortunately for him and for China, though Japan’s actions in Shanghai triggered international condemnation, they did not trigger international intervention, and nothing short of armed intervention was going to deter the Japanese. Japanese expansion was a natural and healthy development for a major power, one Japanese diplomat argued, and asked “what country in its expansion era has ever failed to be trying to its neighbors? Ask the American Indian or the Mexican how excruciatingly trying the young United States used to be, once upon a time.” Japan’s goals were to save Asia from the twin threats of Communism and Western imperialism, which, if left unchecked, would carve up Asia into Western colonial possessions just as it had carved up Africa sixty years earlier.

After the fall of Shanghai, the Japanese government were initially content to hold position there. The purpose of the Army’s intervention had been to teach the Chinese a lesson, so mission accomplished, right? But the great Japanese temptation, and the great Chinese fear, was the proximity of Nanjing, the capital of the Republic of China, just 300 kilometers upriver from Shanghai. The overall Japanese commander on the scene, General Matsui Iwane, vehemently disagreed with the government’s policy, arguing that the time to march on Nanjing was now, while the Chinese were weak and in disarray. Some Japanese Army units had already begun to probe west from Shanghai, in defiance of their orders, and quite possibly with General Matsui’s blessing. Some lower-ranking officers were spurring their soldiers forward with promises of loot and pillage. On December 1, the Army General Staff in Tokyo reversed themselves and granted permission to move against Nanjing.

Meanwhile, in that city, the Chinese government and military were having the opposite argument. Chiang Kai-shek was vehement that the Chinese Army should hold the city and fight, as it had in Shanghai. He still held out the hope that sympathetic Westerners would be moved by Chinese bravery to intervene against Japan. Against him was pretty much the entire National Defense Council. The Chinese generals, and their German advisor, Alexander von Falkenhausen, pointed out that the Army was a mess and needed time to recover from its losses in Shanghai and that Nanjing's geography, as a city on a river plain, made it virtually indefensible.

This debate was only resolved when one general, Tang Shengzhi, spoke out in support of Chiang. So Chiang placed Tang in command of a newly-created Nanjing Garrison Force. This force of 100,000, composed mostly of new recruits, poorly armed and with little training, would be assigned the defense of the city, while the government and the rest of the military evacuated. Foreigners and Chinese civilians in the city were also urged to leave.

Matsui had intended on a slow and cautious advance from Shanghai, but quickly discovered his units far outrunning their assigned objectives. No one wanted to miss out on the promised looting and pillage. The first Japanese units reached the outskirts of Nanjing on December 9. Matsui drew up a surrender demand, calling on the Chinese to send representatives to meet with him within 24 hours to negotiate terms for a peaceful transfer of the city, pledging that civilians and surrendering soldiers would not be harmed, while threatening "no mercy" to Chinese who resisted.

A Japanese bomber dropped thousands of copies of Matsui's surrender demand over Nanjing that day. On the afternoon of December 10, after the 24 hours had passed without a reply from the Chinese, Matsui ordered his forces to take the city.

The fighting was fierce. Members of the Nanjing Garrison Force were under orders not to retreat, and the few who tried were shot by their own comrades. Nevertheless, as General Tang put it in a dispatch to Chiang Kai-shek, "we are fighting against metal with merely flesh and blood." Chiang ordered Tang to withdraw from the city. Tang transmitted a withdrawal order to his troops at 5:00 PM on December 12, just a little more than two days after the Japanese assault began.

It was already too late. The Nanjing Garrison Force was disintegrating. A few were able to escape the city, including Tang himself, but most who tried found Japanese soldiers everywhere they turned. Some Chinese tried swimming across the frigid Yangzi River and soon drowned. Thousands of panicked Chinese soldiers who could not escape shed their uniforms and stole clothing, often from passersby on the street, in the hope of passing for civilians.

Japanese forces took control of Nanjing overnight from December 12 to 13, but there was sporadic fighting for the next few days, as some Chinese continued to resist. General Matsui was a firm believer in the principle that Japan's role in East Asia was not that of a conqueror, but a liberator. Japan's goal was to free its fellow Asian nations from the twin threats of Communism and Western imperialism to build a pan-Asian commonwealth that would benefit all. When he came out of retirement to assume command of Japanese forces in China, he proclaimed, “I am going to the front not to fight an enemy, but in the state of mind of one who sets out to pacify his brother.” When Japanese troops entered Nanjing, Matsui told them “to exhibit the honor and glory of Japan and augment the trust of the Chinese people.”

In hindsight, these pious proclamations read like a sick joke, because what followed was as far from the honorable pacification of a brother as one could imagine. It was in fact a world historic war crime. It began with Japanese efforts to identify and arrest the plain-clothed Chinese soldiers remaining in Nanjing. Soldiers searched the city looking for men who bore signs of military service, such as marks on their shoulders from carrying a backpack. The criteria broadened until it included anyone who had good posture. Most of those identified as soldiers were shot, an estimated 20,000 in all, the majority of whom were likely not soldiers.

But that was just the beginning. There followed a month-long orgy of looting, arson, rape, torture, and murder by Japanese soldiers. Before it was over, a third of Nanjing lay in ruins. Estimates of the numbers of men, women, and children raped begin at 20,000 and go up from there, with most of the victims tortured and murdered afterward. Westerners in the city, including *New York Times* correspondent F. Tillman Durdin and German businessman and Nazi Party member John Rabe, among others, bore witness to the crimes. They reported widespread killings and bodies piled high in the streets and other sights too grisly for me to recount in a family podcast. Rabe, the Nazi, protested to the Japanese embassy in Nanjing, begging the Japanese government to order a halt to the violence.

These horrible weeks of death and destruction are known to history as the Nanjing Massacre, or sometimes the Rape of Nanjing. The total number of Chinese killed is in dispute, partly because Japanese soldiers burned the bodies or buried them in mass graves and military and government records were destroyed, but credible estimates reach 200,000. Some are higher.

The vicious violence in Nanjing, reported to the Western world by witnesses at the scene, did a great deal of damage to Japan’s reputation in the West and tilted Western sympathies more firmly than ever toward China. It didn’t help that on the day Nanjing fell, Japanese artillery had attacked a British gunboat, *Ladybird*, and Japanese planes based on the aircraft carrier *Kaga* had sunk an American gunboat, *Panay*.

In that speech in Chicago I quoted from earlier, President Roosevelt suggested that war was like an epidemic. When it broke out somewhere, you imposed a quarantine. After the Japanese attacks on *Panay* and *Ladybird,* Roosevelt invited the British ambassador to the White House to discuss a joint British-American blockade of Japan, to force an end to the fighting in China. The British ambassador was horrified by the suggestion. In London, the British Admiralty was more receptive. They proposed that the Royal Navy would be able to impose a blockade of Japanese shipping along a line roughly from Singapore to New Zealand and suggested the Americans would be capable, through a combination of embargo and naval action, of closing the Western Hemisphere to Japanese trade. The combined effort would have amounted to an effective blockade at distance, with little risk to the Royal Navy or the U.S. Navy, but Prime Minister Chamberlain and the Cabinet refused to take up the proposal, and it went nowhere.

The Japanese government helped forestall a Western response by formally apologizing to the British and American governments for the attacks on their respective gunboats. Naval Vice Minister Yamamoto Isoroku, who studied at Harvard College, spoke fluent English, and was staunchly opposed to confrontation with the United States, relieved the captain of *Kaga* from his command as a gesture of contrition. Also, the apology to the Americans was offered on Christmas Eve. That was surely not an accident.

From the Japanese point of view, the three-month campaign to "teach the Chinese a lesson," had unfolded more or less according to plan, give or take a massacre. China had lost four of its most important cities, including its former capital, its present capital, and two of its most important ports.

The Japanese had every reason to think the campaign was over, especially in light of Chiang Kai-shek's history of passivity. The general had stirred himself to fight for Shanghai, but had not only lost that battle, but also his capital. The Japanese fully expected Chiang would accept whatever demands they made.

But that's not how it turned out. The Boer War didn't end when the British took the Boer capitals and the Great War didn't end when the Austrians marched into Belgrade. Chiang Kai-shek moved his capital to Wuhan, in the interior of China and virtually dared the Japanese to come after him. "The outcome of this war will not be decided at Nanking or in any other big city; it will be decided in the countryside of our vast country and by the inflexible will of our people…In the end, we will wear the enemy down. In time, the enemy's military might will count for nothing. I can assure you that the final victory will be ours."

The Republic of China and its Communist allies still controlled about 60% of the population of China and sufficient farm production to feed them. The Japanese controlled a few major cities and the rail lines that linked them, although Japanese control beyond the city gates was tenuous, and Chinese guerilla fighters roamed the countryside freely. But China had lost its best soldiers, most of its modern military equipment, and virtually all of its industrial capacity. One reason the Chinese had fought so fiercely in Shanghai was to buy time to ship factories and machinery out of the city. The Chinese had only managed to relocate about 10% of Shanghai's industry before the city fell, but this capacity, such as it was, would be China's industrial base for the duration of this war.

In earlier episodes of this podcast, I've sometimes described Japan as a country punching above its weight. We see another example of this right here, as Japan wins some huge early victories against a country with five times its population and 25 times its land area. But even so, given that discrepancy in their respective sizes, you can't expect a nation like Japan to put a nation as big as of China out of commission with just a few punches, no matter how powerful or deftly applied.

In January 1938, as the violence in Nanjing was dying down, in Tokyo, Prime Minister Konoe responded to China's refusal to come to terms by lamenting that "Kuomintang aggression had not ceased despite its defeat," and the Chinese government was "subjecting its people to great misery." The Japanese government declared it would no longer recognize the Republic of China, and the Army would continue to press offensive action against Chinese defenders with an eye to capturing China's remaining cities, notably Wuhan, now the provisional capital.

But maintaining this three-month punitive campaign that was now turning into a years-long war of attrition was putting a severe strain on the Japanese economy, which was still climbing back from the Great Depression. Even so, in January 1938, the Konoe government introduced the National Mobilization Law. It was a broad and sweeping law that nationalized strategic industries, and empowered the government to impose rationing and price controls, and regulate newspapers and labor unions.

To put it simply, the Japanese government was not only waging war, it was waging total war, the full scale mobilization of the nation to support the war effort, something never seen until the Great War, and never since, until now.

I say the Japanese were waging war, but this was not their official position, for there was no formal declaration of war by Japan. Japan's official diplomatic position was that it did not recognize the Republic of China and that China was not in fact a unified political entity with a national government. That is to say, there was no such thing as a nation called China upon which war could be declared. This was a pacification campaign, meant to restore order to a land in the throes of lawlessness and anarchy. This distinction was important diplomatically, since the United States Congress had by this time passed the first Neutrality Acts which forbade sales of American arms or strategic materials or granting of American loans or credits to any nation at war. The Japanese war effort was dependent on trade with the US, particularly for petroleum. It was therefore necessary that Japan not be at war, at least not officially.

As far as Chinese historiography is concerned, this conflict is usually called the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, or sometimes the Eight Years' War of Resistance, which in China is generally regarded as part of the larger Global Anti-Fascist War, that is to say, what we call the Second World War.

In the West, this conflict is usually called the Second Sino-Japanese War, the First Sino-Japanese War being the conflict in 1894-95, which we talked about in episode 10.

Western historiography generally treats the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 as the "beginning" of the Second World War. This war in Asia was already two years old when that war began, although it’s notable that the two conflicts began independently and that in 1939 there was not yet any overlap in terms of which countries were belligerents in which wars.

That’s the difference between the First and Second World Wars. The First began with a single regional conflict that spread until it engulfed all of Europe. The Second World War is better understood, I think, as multiple separate conflicts that spread until they merged into one mega-conflict. It would be every bit as reasonable to pinpoint the Marco Polo Bridge incident on July 7, 1937 as it would the 1939 invasion of Poland as the beginning of the war.

But however you want to date the beginning of the Second World War, there’s no debate over when and where it ends. It will end here, in East Asia, when the Japanese finally lay down their arms on September 2, 1945.

But that is most definitely a story for another episode.

We’ll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I’d especially like to thank Anthony and Linda for their kind donations, and thank you to Weston for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Anthony and Linda and Weston help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you’d like to become a patron or make a donation, just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you’ll join me next week, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century,* as we set aside politics and the looming war and turn our attention to a simpler and happier topic: fairy tales. When You Wish upon a Star, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

Oh, and one more thing. The Nanjing Massacre was bad enough, or at least the damage it did to Japan’s international standing was bad enough, that the Army General Staff contemplated court-martialing General Matsui. There was no evidence Matsui ordered the violence, but as he was the senior officer, a case could certainly be made holding him accountable for negligence. In the end, they chose not to, although he was relieved of his command in February.

Matsui retired from the military, although he remained involved in various political projects until the end of the war. In March 1946, he was taken into custody by the Allies and tried before the International Military Tribunal on 38 counts of war crimes. He was acquitted of 37. The sole count on which he was convicted was dereliction of his duty to prevent the Nanjing Massacre, for which he was sentenced to death.

Matsui Iwane was executed by hanging on December 23, 1948. He was 70 years old.

[music: Closing Theme]

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