

Student Essay

This is student work. The Library cannot guarantee the accuracy and quality of the content

Course	HUMA4000H Picturing History: Photographers and the Making of Modern China (Spring 2017)
Professor	David Chang Cheng
Student	Kwong Chun Pong, Steven
Title	General Nie Rongzhen and Japanese orphan Mihoko

<http://doi.org/10.14711/spcol/x001286>



The most impressive is the one capturing Japanese orphan Mihoko and General Nie Rongzhen in August 1940. The Eighth Route Army rescued the two little girls in Jingxing Mine Battle and Mihoko was one of them (Chang, 2017)¹. It could be regarded the symbol of humanity in war.

The Japanese parents of Mihoko and her sister were killed during the 1940 Hundred Regiment campaign and two girls were rescued by the Eighth Route Army.

Despite different nationality and even being the enemy,

the Communists were not reluctant to look after these two little girls. Indeed, they offered the girls meals and good care for them, which was like what the Chinese provided to Chinese orphans at that time in the orphanages.² This can show that one of the virtues of Chinese people, righteousness, was kept during the cruel war. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, there was a massacre took place in Nanjing by Japanese soldiers in 1937 which caused several thousand deaths among citizens, including

¹ David C. Chang, caption to photo " General Nie Rongzhen and Japanese orphan Mihoko," HKUST, <http://lbcone.ust.hk/exhibit/exhibition/116/artwork/2901>, accessed 1st May, 2017.

² 孫東民(2005)。戰時悲喜事 今日美穗子。歷史教學問題 2005 年第 5 期，頁 83-85。

innocent children and pregnant women³. This should have raised fury and nationalism among Chinese people. However, the soldiers in the Eighth Route Army were not influenced by those negative emotions and they still judged consciously to save kids, regardless of their nationality. Hence, this behaviour could create a good impression of the Eighth Route Army to gain more public support from the Jinchaji area.

General Nie Rongzhen led the Eighth Route Army and attacked the Zhengtai Railway (正太鐵路) in 1940 in Shijiazhuang. After that, one of the iconic battles of the Sino-Japanese War, the Hundred Regiment Campaign, broke out⁴. The scale of the battle was the biggest one of the Chinese Communist party, as most of the army got involved in the war. They successfully eliminated the Japanese army by guerrilla warfare, and people contributed to this achievement to General Nie because of his tremendous leadership in wartime.

When we are looking at this picture, our focus are easily put on General Nie and the little girl. Neither General Nie nor the little girl show any smile in the photo. It might be interpreted as the hardship during the war in 1940 even though the Eighth Route Army won a victory with the Hundred Regiment Campaign. The background shows the difficult time for Chinese people, because the war destroyed facilities and the Chinese no longer could make their livings. General Nie holds the little hand of Mihoko, demonstrating love and care toward her in that period. The height contrast readily lets the audience conceive the image of father and daughter; it is like a classic family picture. General Nie and the Communists were willing to take on the role of parenting, to look after the orphans and give them the best until they returned to the Japanese side. It seems that Mihoko was able to have enough clothing and a healthy body with help of the Communist army.

³ Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: Norton, 1990, 1999, 2013. <DS754 .S65 2013 THREE copies AND DS754 .S65 1990 ONE copy>. PP. 448

⁴ 楊輝宗(2015)。抗日烽火中的轟榮臻。紅岩春秋 2015 年第 9 期，頁 12-15。

Afterward, General Nie wrote a letter to Japanese side and requested to return these two innocent little girls to them. The content was mainly about how despite the fact that the Japanese army invaded and committed crimes in China during this period, the citizens of both Chinese and Japanese sides were innocent, and they should receive fair treatments.⁵ The fault and mistakes should be attributed to the militarism of Japan, not the Japanese public. Therefore, General Nie wrote for the return of two girls by sending the CCP army and carrying the two little girls with some basic equipment.

Other than manifesting the humanity of the Chinese during the Sino-Japanese War, this photo also helped to build up the relationship between China and Japan in 1980s. On 29th May, 1980, there was an article published in People's Daily entitled 'Where are you, Japanese girl?'⁶. After nearly 40 years, some soldiers in the army remembered Mihoko and hoped that General Nie and Mihoko could have a reunion. Indeed, the article raised a great feedback in China and Japan and eventually she 'returned' to China in July to revisit her second homeland. Aged 44, she was welcomed by the Chinese warmly, like when welcoming leaders from other countries. During that time, she visited different places including the mine where her father worked. The most touching moment was the meeting with old General Nie in Beijing. She appreciated the rescue of General Nie very much and Nie told her that this was one of the virtues of Chinese and Chinese respected and emphasized the humanity.⁷ It was believed that the return of Mihoko assisted China and Japan to rebuild their relationship after the cruel Second World War. Although sorrowful history could not be modified, both Chinese and Japanese could treat each other well, and as friends have more cooperation in different aspects. Therefore, the meeting could be said to symbolize the restart of normal Sino-Japanese diplomatic relationships.

⁵ 沙飛、王雁(2005)。沙飛攝影全集第 192 號插圖《聶榮臻寫給日方的信》。北京長城出版社。

⁶ David C. Chang, caption to photo " General Nie bid farewell to Japanese orphan Mihoko, who was to be taken back to the enemy side," HKUST, <http://lbcone.ust.hk/exhibit/exhibition/116/artwork/2902>, accessed 1st May, 2017.

⁷ 孫東民(2005)。戰時悲喜事 今日美穗子。歷史教學問題 2005 年第 5 期，頁 83-85。