

Discussion on the Undifferentiated Bombing of Hunan From Japanese Invading Army

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Abstract

After the war broke out, based on the specific geographical location of Hunan and the implementation of the strategy “of political attack and long-lasting war”, Japanese invading army carried out large-scale undifferentiated bombings in Hunan. Japanese invading army’s undifferentiated bombings have the characteristics of long lasting in time, dense in scale, widely in geography with focus and they are strategic and of deterrence. In the eight years from the outbreak of the war for the victory of the war, the Japanese invading army’s undifferentiated bombing in Hunan has caused serious personal injury and property damage, and greatly hindered and undermined the process of modernization in Hunan.

Key words: Japanese invading army; Hunan; Undifferentiated bombing; Discussion

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INTRODUCTION

From August 14, 1937 when Japanese airplane bombed Changsha to the final victory of the war, the Japanese

invading army implemented undifferentiated bombing in Hunan for eight years, causing heavy casualties and property losses. In recent years, scholars are concerned about studies of Japanese invading army’s undifferentiated bombing in Hunan, and they have made achievements. Among them, the most representative works include *Research on Hunan Economic Losses and Hunan Casualties during Anti-Japanese War* (Xiao, 2013) and *Population Casualties and Property Losses in Hunan Province during the Anti-Japanese War* (Research Group, 2010) and so on. These achievements are mainly concentrated in the sorting out of the general condition of the undifferentiated bombing of Japanese invading army in Hunan and they do not have in-depth exploration of the reason, characteristics and consequences of the undifferentiated bombing of Japanese invading army. Based on this, this paper tends to deepen the research through the sorting and interpretation informative, reliable historical data.

1. THE REASON OF JAPANESE INVADING ARMY’S UNDIFFERENTIATED BOMBING IN HUNAN

After the outbreak of the war, in order to destroy the Chinese people’s confidence and determination to resist and completely conquer the Chinese nation, Japanese invading army took advantage of its powerful air superiority to carry out brutal wanton and indiscriminate bombing. Japanese invading army attached great importance to the undifferentiated bombing in Hunan and that is primarily due to the special geographical position of Hunan and Japanese aggressors’ strategy of “political attack and long-lasting war”.

The geographical location of Hunan: its west starts from east longitude 108 ° 47 ‘, expanding to east longitude 114°15’. There is 5°28’ across Hunan with

a straight-line distance of about 532 kilometers; its south starts from north latitude 24°38', expanding to north latitude 30°08'. There is 5°30' latitude expansion from its north to the south by a straight-line distance of approximately 649.5 kilometers. From the perspective of its latitude, Hunan is only 1° 11' away from the Tropic of Cancer and its southeast is only 325 kilometers away from the coast (Records of Hunan Province Compilation Committee, 1982, p.1). Just because of the special geographical location of Hunan Province, after the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, Japanese troops began a massive undifferentiated bombing in Hunan. In addition, in the central southern region, the location of Hunan is rather special.

Hunan is next to six provinces, with north coastal plain bordering Hubei, south relying on Wuling and bordering Guangdong and Guangxi, east adjacent to Mufu, with Wugong Mountains as the border with Jiangxi, west connecting to the eastern edge of the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau and bordering Guizhou Province, northwest bordering east Sichuan and west Hubei with Wuling Mountain Range as the border. (Ibid., p.2)

Before and after the full outbreak of the war, in order to achieve interoperability with the neighboring provinces of Hunan, the national government built and opened a number of railway lines, of which the most important is Yue-Han Railway and Xiang-Gui railway. In August 1936, the Yue-Han line opened up, becoming the north-south traffic artery of Hunan connecting neighboring provinces. In December 1939, Xiang-Gui line opened up, becoming the east-west traffic artery of Hunan connected to the neighboring provinces. During the Anti-Japanese War, the two traffic arteries become the lifeblood line supporting the lasting war in China. According to the statistics of "special operation" from 1938 to 1941, Xiang-Gui railway operated a total of 2,987 trains, transporting 1,745,290 people in troops, military supplies of 497,021 tons, military vehicles of 41,949, including sporadic military vehicles of 4,155 in 1941 (Second Historical Archives of China, 1997, p.239). It is just because of the special location of Hunan that during the War the Japanese invading army implemented a large-scale undifferentiated bombing in Hunan.

Japanese invading army's implementation of a large-scale undifferentiated bombing in Hunan is also related to Japanese imperialism's implementation of the strategy of "political attach and long-lasting war". In the early stage of the war, based on the great disparity in strength of Japan and China, the Japanese imperialists believed that they just needed three months and then their strong army could destroy the resistance of Chinese army and achieve their strategic objective to occupy the whole China. On October 1, 1937, when the Japanese government talked about the use of force guideline in *Guideline to Handle China Incident*, they believed that: "The main areas of the army military forces would roughly be in Ji (Hubei), Cha (Chaha'er) and Shanghai" and "to carry out naval

and air combat in necessary areas." (Fudan University, Department of History, Japanese History Group Compilation, 1975, p.244) Here, although the Japanese government stressed that the use of force guidelines were the combination of marine and naval, air combats, yet they did not take air war as the most important strategy to conquer China. With the arrival of the stalemate of Chinese Anti-Japanese War, the Japanese imperialists' strategy with the attempt to use the powerful army advantage to rapidly destroy China was in tatters. Faced with jagged Chinese battlefield, the Japanese imperialists had to make major strategic adjustments. On December 6, 1938, the Japanese army ministry in *Processing Strategy in China* pointed out that the essence of war with China is a protracted war, and therefore with the occupation of Wuhan and Guangzhou as the division, in the future we will implement the strategy of "political attach" and "move forward to build a new China", that is "to restore law and order as a fundamental and various other facilities should adapt to this strategy." "Although the work to destroy the remaining anti-Japanese forces still continues, we should primarily with force as the background combine with the use of plans and political strategy." Till then, the Japanese invading army has established the strategy of "political attach and long-lasting war" to the Chinese government. In discussing how to implement this strategy, the Japanese army ministry in *Processing Strategy in China* also stressed that: "The implementation of the strategy is the key, and we should tenaciously cling to air operations and maritime blockade, trying to cut off the remnants' external liaison lines, especially weapons input lines." (JDA War History Codification, 1987, pp.459-460) This shows that the "strategy of political attach and long-lasting war" implemented by the Japanese invading army, in essence, is the strategy of "political attach and long-lasting war" dominated by air force. Immediately, the Japanese invading army took the wartime capital of the National Government, Chongqing, as a primary objective of the undifferentiated bombing and carried out wanton fatigue bombing. At the same time, Japanese troops took the undifferentiated bombing in Changsha, Changde, Zhijiang, Enshi, and Huiyang as "coordinate operations." (Xu, 2006) From this we can see that the Japanese invading army's undifferentiated bombing in Hunan is the logical result of the implementation of its "strategy of political war and long-lasting war".

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE INVADING ARMY'S UNDIFFERENTIATED BOMBING IN HUNAN

After the war broke out, the Japanese invading army carried out a large scale undifferentiated bombings in Hunan and they caused serious casualties and property losses to Hunan. Overall, these undifferentiated bombings

presented the characteristics of lasting for a long time and being relatively dense, wide in territory with focuses and being strategic and in deterrence.

First, the bombings lasted for a long time and were relatively dense. At the early stage of the full breakout of the war, when the Japanese invaders carried out undifferentiated bombings in the fighting provinces, they also began to bomb the rear cities non-discriminatorily. The *Air Raid Investigation Report of Changsha* pointed out that on August 14, 1937, the Japanese airplane conducted the first air strikes in Changsha, cast 28 bombings, killing 54 people, wounding 58 people and destroying 14 houses (Xiao, 2003, p.39). This is the first time the Japanese invaders carried out undifferentiated bombings in Hunan. Only from August 1937 to May 1938, the Japanese invaders implemented undifferentiated bombing to seven undefended cities in Hunan and they are Changsha, Hengyang, Liling, Zhuzhou, Xinqiao, Leiyang, and Fenghua (Anonymous, 1938). From the first bombing of Changsha by the Japanese invaders to the end of the war, the Japanese invaders had carried out large-scale undifferentiated bombings as long as eight years in Hunan. Compared with similar provinces, the time that Japanese invaders carried out undifferentiated bombing in Hunan is relatively longer. Japanese invaders' undifferentiated bombing in Hunan also presents the feature of being relatively dense. In terms of time, Japanese aircraft bombed the same city for several days in the same month. For example, in October 1939, Japanese aircraft bombed the city of Hengyang on the 3rd, 4th, 9th, 10th and 11th for five days. In April 1941, Japanese aircraft bombed Changsha County on the 3rd, 4th, 9th and 22nd for four days. In May 1944, Japanese aircraft bombed Hengshan County on the 7th, 8th, 14th and 15th for four days. Judging from the frequency, Japanese aircraft bombed the same city for several times on the same day. For example, on October 16, 1938, Japanese aircraft bombed Zhuzhou for 10 times; on 17th, Japanese aircraft bombed Zhuzhou for six times. In September 1942, Japanese aircraft bombed Hengyang City for 10 times. In March 1943, Japanese aircraft bombed Nan County for nine times (Xiao, 2003, p.40, 42, 53, 64-65). These intensive bombing fully reflects the extreme brutality of Japanese imperialism.

Second, the bombing is geographically wide while with focus. After the outbreak of the war, the Japanese invaders carried out large-scale non-discriminatory bombing in most areas in Hunan province. In December 1946, *Statistics on the Loss of Hunan in the War* published by the Census and Statistics Chamber of Hunan Provincial Government pointed out that, from July 1937 to August 1945, the Japanese army flew 1,047 sorties and bombed 56 counties in 78 counties and cities in Hunan for 1,360 times, causing heavy casualties and property losses. Through serious research, Xiao Dongliang proposes that the Japanese aircraft bombed 60 counties in Hunan for 2,080 times, with four more

counties and 700 more bombings than the *Statistics on the Loss of Hunan in the War*. The two sets of data reflect that the Japanese invaders' undifferentiated bombing in Hunan involves a wide territory, accounting for 71.8% or 76.9% of the province's area. In other words, more than 70% of cities and counties in Hunan suffered brutal and devastated bombings from Japanese planes. Japanese invaders' undifferentiated bombing in Hunan also exhibits selectivity, with particular emphasis on the bombing of politically, economically and culturally prosperous cities. Hengyang County, as an important city in the south of Hunan, suffered 528 Japanese aircraft bombings. As the capital of Hunan Province, Changsha was bombed 119 times by the Japanese aircraft. Changde County, as the political, economic and cultural center in northwestern Hunan, suffered no less than 48 Japanese aircraft bombings (Ibid., pp.38-39) The Japanese invaders carried out massive indiscriminate bombings in these cities, making the previous prosperous cities become devastated and scarred.

Third, these bombings are strategic and of deterrence. In order to psychologically destroy the confidence of the people of Hunan to resist in the war, the Japanese invaders' undifferentiated bombing in Hunan reflects the strategic characteristic. Therefore, the transit lines in Hunan Province, particularly airports and railway stations have become important targets for bombing of Japanese aircraft. Zhuzhou, as the intersection of the Yue-Han line and the Zhejiang-Jiangxi railway, suffered several Japanese aircraft bombing raids. On October 8, 1937, six Japanese airplanes bombed Zhuzhou for the first time. They cast eight bombs, killing 10 people (Zhuzhou CPPCC Cultural and Historical Data Research Committee, 1982, p.112). On August 31, 1938, 18 Japanese airplanes bombed Zhuzhou Railway Station and cast more than 100 heavy bombs and incendiary bombs, killing and wounding more than 270 people and damaging more than 100 houses (Li et al., 1995, p.995). Lengshuitan Station, as an important hub in Hunan-Guangxi line, was repeatedly bombed by the Japanese aircraft. In October 1940, 18 Japanese aircraft carried out missions to bomb Lengshuitan Station for three times, blowing up more than 80 houses and killing seven people (Ibid., p.1012). On July 8, 1941, 4 Japanese planes bombed Lengshuitan Station. They cast four bombs, killing 15 people and injuring 26 people and damaging 13 houses with appliances losses amounting to 150,000 Yuan and other losses 296,000 yuan (Xiao, 2003, p.56). Zhijiang is an important military fortress in Hunan and has become an important goal of the Japanese bombing. On November 11, 1938, 18 Japanese aircraft bombed Zhijiang. They cast 124 bombs at the airport, making the airport runway and apron suffer serious damage. On August 3, 1941, 9 Japanese planes bombed Zhijiang. They cast 33 bombs, wounding five residents and damaging 59 houses (Hunan [Huaihua] Research Group, 2008, p.160,

162). In order to enhance the deterrence of the bombing, the Japanese invaders flagrantly violated the international law to drop bacterial bombs in Hunan. On November 4, 1941, Japanese planes dropped soybeans, sorghum, sago, rags, cotton strips and other items with plague bacteria in Changde. This caused plague in Changde and Taoyuan for two years with 264 affected and 243 people killed (Zhong, 2005, p.163). Japanese invaders carried out undifferentiated bombing in transit lines, especially airports and stations in an attempt to destroy the Hunan people's confidence and determination of Anti-Japanese War. However, it did not achieve their purpose. The people of Hunan became more courageous in the Japanese aircraft bombing and made important contributions to the victory of the war.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF JAPANESE INVADING ARMY'S UNDIFFERENTIATED BOMBING IN HUNAN

After the outbreak of the war, Japanese troops began a massive undifferentiated bombing in Hunan. After the war entered a stalemate, in order to implement the "strategy of political attack and long-lasting war", the Japanese invaders carried out more massive undifferentiated bombing in Hunan, causing heavy casualties and property losses, greatly hindering and undermining the modernization process of Hunan.

From the outbreak of the war for the victory of the war, the Japanese invaders' undifferentiated bombing in Hunan caused heavy casualties and property losses. Due to the size and complexity of the materials, the subjectivity of the investigators and limitations of the original files, the author is unable to make an accurate calculation of the losses caused by the undifferentiated bombing by Japanese invaders in Hunan and can only provide a limited description based on data occupied. From July 7 1937 to the end of November 1939, in the bombing in Hunan that the Japanese invaders implemented, they flew 3,606 planes, cast 15,198 bombs, blew up 1,243 bridges and rails, destroyed 3,516 sleepers, and blew up 16,119 houses, with a total valuated value of 42,836,520 Yuan. They killed 8,058 people and injured 7,988 people. Among them, in the Japanese aircraft's 38 bombings of Changsha, they flew 473 planes, cast 1,682 bombs, blew up 142 bridges and rail as well as 373 crossties, and destroyed 2,524 houses, with a total value of 6,310,000 Yuan. They killed 1,403 people and injured 1,795 people. In the 38 bombings in Hengyang the Japanese army implemented, they flew 445 planes, cast 2,244 bombs, blew up 174 bridges and rails as well as 300 crossties, and bombed 1,768 houses, with a total value of 4,537,690 yuan. They killed 1,903 people and injured 705 people. In 34 bombings in Zhuzhou the Japanese army implemented, they flew 448 planes, cast 1,466 bombs, blew up 316

bridges and rails as well as 1,286 crossties, and damaged 901 houses, with a total value of 6,889,890 yuan. They killed 419 people and injured 452 people (Hunan Research Group, 2010, p.34-36). In terms of the single bombings by the Japanese aircraft, the loss it caused is also very huge. On August 10, 1940, the Japanese invaders bombed Hengyang. They flew 90 planes, dropped more than 800 bombs, killed more than 400 people, injured more than 1,000 people and destroyed more than 1,300 houses (Zhong, 2005, pp.34-36). On February 9, 1941, the Japanese invaders bombed the downtown of Lingling County. They flew 18 planes, killing 305 people, injuring 696 people and damaging 45 houses¹. On June 2, 1944, the Japanese invaders bombed the downtown of Chaling County. They flew three planes and dropped 22 bombs, killing 459 people, injuring 812 people and damaging 543 houses with the loss of over 1.7 billion (Yuan Hunan Province Chaling, para.5, 1993, p.519). These data, although not panoramically display the serious casualties and property losses caused by the bombing by Japanese invaders in Hunan, to some extent reflects the unspeakable crimes committed by the Japanese militarism in Hunan.

From the outbreak of the war for the victory of the war, Japanese invaders' undifferentiated bombings in Hunan also greatly hinder and sabotage the modernization process of Hunan. Transport, as a strategic and fundamental industry in national economy, is an important symbol of modernization. In order to cut off the supply of the Chinese army, the Japanese invaders carried out large-scaled strategic bombings of the transportation lines in Hunan. In 1940, in the Japanese troops' bombings of the traffic lines in Hunan, they flew 210 planes and dropped 741 bombs in 17 bombings. In 1941, in the Japanese troops' bombings of the traffic lines, they flew 143 planes and dropped 788 bombs in 17 bombings². In order to destroy China's air defense forces, the Japanese invading army also conducted large-scale undifferentiated bombings to airports in Hunan. On September 3, 1938, Japanese troops bombed Chen County Airport. They flew 9 airplanes and dropped 88 bombs that killed 38 people, injured 56 others and damaged 313 houses. In December 1939, the Japanese invaders carried out multiple bombings to airports in Xiangtan, Hengyang and Zhijiang. Among them, they bombed Xiangtan once and dropped 23 bombs, killing one person and wounding two people; they bombed Hengyang 4 times and dropped 127 bombs, killing 14 people, wounding 52 people and damaging 18 houses; they bombed Zhijiang twice and dropped 300 bombs (Xiao, 2003, p.50, 73). Industry plays

¹ Hunan Archives. *Survey Report of the Damage in the Air Raid in Hunan Lingling County (August 20, 1936)*, pp.46-1-31.

² Sorted out according to *The Twenty-ninth Year Annual National Air Strikes Situation and Review* by the Air Defense Committee of the Department of Aviation and *The Thirtieth Year Annual National Air Strikes Situation and Review*.

a leading role in social and economic development and is also an important indicator of modernization. After the outbreak of the war, in order to completely destroy the production capacity of China, the Japanese invaders implemented large-scale bombings of factory planes in Hunan. On October 8, 1937, the Japanese troops flew 9 airplanes to bomb Dongjiaduan Arsenal and Tianxin Locomotive Repair Factory in Zhuzhou, killing more than 40 workers and destroying a plant (Li et al., 1995, p.995). On December 11, 1939, Japanese troops flew 10 planes to bomb the arsenal in Yanxi, making 1/4 of the gun factory bombed and the entire gun factory bombed, killing more than 30 workers³. From December 11 to 13, 1939, Japanese invaders flew 18 airplanes to continue bombing Yanxi 11th Arsenal in Anhua. They dropped 60 bombs and most of the plant and a large number of residential houses were bombed, killing more than 100 people (Zhang, 1997, p.421). The bombings brought immeasurable losses to the modernization of Hunan.

CONCLUSION

From the outbreak of the war to the victory of the war, based on the specific geographical location of Hunan and the implementation of the strategy “of political attack and long-lasting war”, Japanese invading army carried out a large scale of undifferentiated bombing in Hunan. These bombings have the characteristics of long lasting in time, dense in scale, widely in geography with focus and they are strategic and of deterrence, causing serious personal injury and property damage, and greatly hindering and undermining the modernization process in Hunan.

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³ The Civil Affairs Archives in Anhua County. *County Government Files on Relief after the Enemy’s Bombing in Yanxi (1939-1940)*. , Fond No. 505, Docket No.243, p.12, 99.