



## A Contemporary Witness' Journal Account of the 1941 Invading Japanese Army's Fatigue Bombing of Chongqing

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### Abstract

In 1941, on the basis of *Operation 101*, the Japanese Army continued carrying out *Operation 102*, a deliberate "fatigue bombardment" against Chongqing civilian targets, in an attempt to cause popular confusion at the rear of the war, disintegrate the wartime morale of the soldiers and civilians, so as to achieve the establishment of a beachhead. However, the army and civilians of Chongqing endured suffering during the bombing, exhibiting the spirit of total war. A contemporary's journal as an eyewitness account, documenting current affairs in the manner of a contemporary, from the perspective of personal memory, provides a more realistic reproduction of the facts of the fatigue bombing and a more authentic record of the reality, area, and experience of contemporary people during the fatigue bombing. This experience not only reproduces the dehumanizing ravages of the fatigue bombing on the people at the rear of the war, but also, from a microscopic point of view, reproduces the final spiritual essence of the civilians and army of Chongqing.

**Key words:** Journal; Chongqing; Bombing

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### INTRODUCTION

Tetsuo Maeda made the following definition of "sudden 'fatigue bombing'" in reference to "fatigue bombing"

in *The Chongqing Bombing*: "Of the The Army, Navy, and Airforce coordinated implementation of *Operation 100* (1939), *Operation 101* (1940), and *Operation 102* (1941), Operations 101 and 102 in particular reduced the old downtown area of Chongqing to ashes. As the Japanese army and navy planes continuously bombed the citizens of Chongqing, they simply could not leave their bomb shelters. This kind of bombing was called "fatigue bombing" and continued until Autumn of 1941. The kind of fatigue bombing was only relieved until the eve of war between Japan and the US (Maeda, 1989).

From July 27 to August 31, 1941, the Japanese Army, on the basis of the 1940 *Operation 101*, continuously implemented *Operation 102*. However, the plan was then aborted due to the transfer of Japanese naval aviation forces to the Pacific Theater, so that there were only 36 days of attacks. However, the intensity of the bombing was undimmed. Tetsuo Maeda in *The Chongqing Bombing* could not help but express his thoughts on this: "To so stubbornly attack a region and single city is quite rare in other operations of the Japanese Army. Looking back on the history of air attacks in the world, it is hard to find a similar case." (Maeda, 1989)

According to archives there were the following Japanese Army bombings from May to August:

**Table 1**  
**Japanese Army's Bombing of Chongqing From May to August 1941**

Month	Number of airstrikes	Number of enemy aircraft	Duration of attacks
May	7	452	22 h
June	15	494	38 h 56 min
July	12	675	52 h 36 min
August	45	1277	h 56 min

## 1. JAPANESE ARMY'S FATIGUE BOMBING STRATEGY

From the records in the journal of Wang Zizhuang, we can clearly see that the strategy of the 1941 fatigue bombings:

First, they are many and concentrated. On June 19, Wang Zizhuang writes in his journal: "The weather will definitely be clear when enemy aircraft bomb Chongqing. There were more than 20 to 30 attacks in a half a year. Although the number of planes was not as great as last year's, every time they attack one or two places, the damage is complete. This will lead eventually to the complete ruin of Chongqing." (Institute of Modern History, Central Research Academy, 2001; Wang, 2001) This sort of strategy certainly caused great distress to the army and civilians in the rear area. On July 7, Wang Zizhuang acknowledges in his journal: "Although the moral of the citizens is good, the people's lives are increasingly painful. That is to say, the bombings of the enemy are many and concentrated, and their destructive power greater compared with last year's." (Wang, 2001)

Second, is the emphasis on universal destructive capability, as Wang Zizhuang speaks of in his journal of June 30: "The bombs are many and relatively small, however they have universal destructive power." (Ibid.) At the same time, the Japanese Army still intentionally created terror. Wang Zizhuang mentions in his journal of August 10, that during bombings, the Japanese threw "bombs bursting in air." According to the description of Wang Zizhuang, this kind of bomb "was a mass of flames in the air, a suddenly heard great bomb sound, incessantly rumbling. The cover of it is a cluster bomb, so it implemented great destruction. But this kind of explosion is sufficient to increase people's terror." (Ibid.)

Third, is the aim at long-term harassment. Wang Zizhuang writes in his journal of July 28, (Ibid.)

The enemy plan is deeply toxic, every two hours a number of planes take off, enter the borders of Sichuan, so we dare not lift the alarm; the majority of the people in the city must hide in damp bomb shelters. Thus it is that business is neglected, the people are alarmed at the point that people cannot eat; truly they are cruelly abused.

**Table 2**  
**Schedule of August 8-14, 1941 Japanese Air Attacks on Chongqing**

Attack date	Number of attacks	Time of each air attack	Total duration of air attacks
August 8	2	(1) 13:16-15:40; (2) 00:45-02:00	3 h 39 min
August 9	2	(1) 07:48-09:55; (2) 11:27-15:25	6 h 5 min
August 10	4	06:48-11:45; (2) 14:05-16:05 (3) 17:45-19:24; (4) 20:50-01:12	12 h 58 min
August 11	3	06:55-16:00; (2) 14:43-16:10 (3) 00:34-04:59	14 h 27 min
August 12	3	07:25-09:35; (2) 11:27-13:05 (3) 15:04-16:42	5 h 26 min
August 13	2	03:55-07:09; (2) 07:10-14:54	10 h 58 min
August 14	3	(1) 01:41-03:38; (2) 04:56-06:44 (3) 10:56-14:12	8 h 1 min

This sort of strategy also had serious consequences, just as Wang Zizhuang says in his journal of July 30: The long period of hardship in holes in the ground, running out of portable dry food and potable water, the coming of a number of enemy planes every one or two hours, more than twenty planes at most – the progress of this strategy's kind of cruel abuse of our people is necessarily 24 hours of non-stop bombing of our people so that moonlight is only visible when the bombing slows down slightly.

Of particular interest was June 5, during the Japanese Army's first night attack for that year, because the raid lasted five hours, resulting in the Chongqing Tunnel suffocation tragedy. It's horrors are clearly recorded in contemporary diaries.

Tang Zong writes in his diary of June 5: "The dead suffered, tearing their clothes, pulling out their hair, their hair still in their grasp even in death. Truly it was unspeakable." (The Ministry of Public Security Archives, 1991; Tang, 1991)

During the night attack of June 5, Shen Zui was lucky enough to enter a large tunnel's bomb shelter. When he entered the shelter, he saw, "corpses arrayed everywhere around the entrance of the shelter." (Shen, 1991) That night, Shen Zui went to the caves to number the dead. In the darkness of the shelter, thinking of the condition of last night's dead, even this Kuomintang secret serviceman could not help but "shudder." On June 12, Chang Renxia, during a dark night, went to mourn at the tunnel entrance,

On the two sides of the tunnel, some entire families were dead, and so no one came to see them. I heard that when people died, they gave a great wail until they were silent, many bit their skin in their pain. Although Dante's Divine Comedy describes scenes of hell, it cannot compete. (Chang, 1999)

## 2. THE BOMBING REACHED A FEVER PITCH DURING AUGUST

During August, the bombing reached a fever pitch; from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>, Japanese aircraft bombed Chongqing day and night as materials from archives show below:

According to the statistics in the table above, during this week, the Japanese air attacks totaled 61 hours and 34 minutes in duration, with an average of nearly nine hours per day. One could say this was unforgettable for people of that time; Xu Shoushang, Liu Jie, Huang Yanpei, Mei Yiqi, Shen Zui, Tang Zong, Wang Shijie, Wang Zizhuang, and Weng Wenhao all recorded this day by day in their journals.

The most concise of the journals, *The Journal of Liu Jie* records: On August 8, "The afternoon alarm was not lifted until four pm... the midnight alarm was not lifted until 04:00 am." (Liu, 2009) On August 9, "at 08:10 am there was another alarm that was not lifted until 11:00 am. In the afternoon the 01.30 pm alarm was lifted at 04:00 pm. The 06:00 pm alarm was lifted at 08.30 pm. The 10:00 pm alarm lasted until 01.10 am. In the light dawn, another alarm came at 04:00 am. Within one day there were five alarms." (Ibid.) On August 10,

The morning 7 am alarm was lifted at 11 am. After returning home, another alarm came at 1 pm and was lifted at 02:00 pm. A thunderstorm began at 03:00 pm, until there was a misty light moon and I slept until there was another alarm at 01:15 am. (Liu, 2009)

On August 12,

last night's alarm lasted until 05:00 am this morning. There was another alarm at 07:00 am that was lifted at 12:00 pm. At 02:00 pm there was another alarm that was lifted at 04:00 pm ... In the middle of the night there was another alarm at 1.30 am that was lifted at 03:30 am. (Ibid.)

On August 13,

there was an alarm at 6 am that lasted straight through until 03:00 pm. Over a hundred enemy planes came, divided into five groups entering the city and dropping bombs. Five times in all at 06:00 am, 08:00 am, 10:00 am, 12:00 pm, and 02:00 pm. (Ibid.)

On August 14, "at 11 am there was an alarm that was lifted at 02:00 pm." (Ibid.)

Wang Zizhuang's remarks in his journal also basically confirm what is recorded in Liu Jie's journal: On August 8, enemy aircraft struck day and night; on August 9, enemy aircraft struck again for the whole day; on August 10, enemy aircraft struck day and night; on August 11, there alarm lasted more than ten hours; on August 12, enemy aircraft bombed Chongqing four times; on August 13, the alarms lasted ten hours and the city was bombed five times; on August 14, there was an attack in the afternoon. (Institute of Modern History, Central Research Academy, 2001; Wang, 2001).

Xu Shoushang's journal's are marked on an average of every day with the characters, "Clear and hot," "Clear, extremely hot," allowing one to see the harm that the hot summer fatigue bombing of Chongqing brought.

Compared with airstrike records in archival material, the airstrikes recorded in the diaries lasted longer and came more often. This is due to the numbers in the archival statistics being published afterwards, and because they only record the time of air strikes. But diaries however,

record events on the day they took place and they record the time when alarms sounded time. As a result, the diaries appear more reliable and the air raid alarm times recorded more tellingly the impact of fatigue bombing.

Huang Yanpei in the journal for one week describes in detail in the destruction of the Zhang Yuan residence: On August 9,

Zhang family garden was bombed into more than twenty pieces, the largest one, a thousand pounds, fell onto the road, creating pits twenty to thirty feet deep, turning the earth and stones all around into a hill; remaining were a few five hundred pound pieces; there were countless houses razed to the ground; the kitchen of the office of fund raising was ruined, the rest is unrecognizable. At four o'clock the alarm was lifted. Suddenly, a hurricane arose and broken tiles danced everywhere, the houses tottering down; I dashed to a clearing to avoid it. (CASS Institute of Modern History, 2008; Hang, 2008)

On August 10, "Zhang Residence has again been hit by many explosive bombs, incendiary bombs, knocking holes in the roof, the holes full of bombs; the incendiary bombs were fortunately extinguished by the ambulance crew, and did not ignite." (Hang, 2008) On August 14,

The Zhang Residence has again been hit by bombs, the office of fund raising is completely razed and the roof of the home is full of many giant holes from bombs; the residential floors are destroyed. The alarm was raised at half past 3 p.m. police solution, leaving a desolate and miserable stretch. (Ibid.)

Because the Japanese Zero fighters escorted the bombers, the Chinese air force was unable to resist, and the Japanese planes intentionally took a small fleet to take turns carrying out harassment effort. Huangyanpei in his diary of August 10 clearly indicates the intention of the Japanese: "Only three planes in each group entered the town to drop bombs; the intention was to disrupt the city for the long-term." (Ibid.) In addition to uninterrupted bombing, the Japanese also deliberately created terror. Wang Zizhuang's diary of August 10th mentions that the Japanese threw "bombs bursting in air" during the bombing. According to Wang Zizhuang's description, these bombs were

a mass of flames in the air, a suddenly heard great bomb sound, incessantly rumbling. The cover of it is a cluster bomb, so it implemented great destruction ... But this kind of explosion is sufficient to increase people's terror. (Ibid.)

Although, during this week's bombing, soldiers and civilians in Chongqing took proper protection, greatly reducing casualties, the bombings caused a human tragedy. As Tang Zong's diary records, during the bombing on August 13, the bomb shelter at Fairy Cave 180 public park was bombed, "because so many entire families were wiped out, only a handful were left to claim them." (The Ministry of Public Security Archives, 1991; Tang, 1991)

Although casualties were not too great, this one short week of air strikes brought considerable distress to the military and civilians of Chongqing.

Wang Shijie

August 10, enemy planes attacked Sichuan and Chongqing. Alarms in Chongqing lasted 10 hours (Wang, 2013).

August 11, enemy planes attacked Chongqing continuously from morning to midnight. Alarms lasted 10 hours and the work of all divisions was deeply affected (Ibid.).

August 12, our airforce took off to fight in the night because the number of enemy planes coming in the night is fairly small; their intention is to disturb people, preventing them from sleeping (Ibid.).

August 13, from early morning to afternoon, enemy planes came in waves to massively bomb Chongqing. Chongqing's water and electricity have been cut off for many days. The work of all divisions is at a standstill (Ibid.).

August 14, the training of our new Air Force is not yet complete. Today, on Air Force Day, the enemy prevented our air force from fighting and during the day, about a hundred enemy aircraft struck simultaneously. Our air force still fights (Ibid.).

Wang Zizhuang

August 9, (Summary: The enemy planes attacked again all day.) Like this, all day long, alarms are moderate. Divisions are unable to work, an intentional destruction of order in our rear area (Ibid.).

August 11, (summary: Alarms for ten hours) There is no chance of respite. The Enemy are like madmen; most people are inspired with panic, frightened such that they cannot eat or sleep, truly making our people desperate (Ibid.).

August 12, (Summary: enemy planes bomb Chongqing four times) the air attack tactics used by the enemy this year are that, every three hours or so, they bomb once, but each time there are ten or twenty planes. Our people's daily work cannot help but be stopped (Ibid.).

August 13, (Summary: ten hours of alert, five bombings of Chongqing City) half past five there were air raids, with most of the people avoiding them in bomb shelters. I see the people there are listless, lethargic, wan, and unable to sleep or eat. One cannot avoid danger at this time, or certainly avoid disease. After the city has been repeatedly bombed, we lack water and electricity. There are those who can sell a bucket of river water for more than ten dollars. Homes are destroyed and prices soar; it is truly a scene of wartime horror scene (Ibid.).

Even such fierce bombing still did not crush the fighting will of the army of Chongqing. Zeng Xubai in his journal for this week writes:

From August 8 to 14 the enemy has continued continuous bombing day and night without a break. The department canteen, each staff quarters for men and women, foreign reporter hostels, have all been blown up; two staff housing buildings have also been burned down; Deputy Minister Dong's official residence and cottages have also been shattered. Colleagues and so on hid from air raids for eighty hours; one can see that they are

exhausted; also the residences and office premises are destroyed or ruined and we are stricken with poor working conditions. On the one hand, the remaining buildings are being reallocate to colleagues, and on the other, the Governor General's Administration Division is rushing day and night to build grass cottages. We rest between alerts and encourage our colleagues to continue to stay on the job. We dispatch a compilation of English language press releases daily. The foreign affairs section assists foreign reporters in their activities without cease; during the bombing, the volume of telegrams to the outside is many times greater than usual. The division that receives enemy broadcast can receive them from the enemy just as before; the photography department all immediately goes out to photograph or film the situation after each bombing; they are particularly diligent. Every comrade in this environment of hardship, has an unrelenting work ethic, which is quite gratifying. (Second Historical Archives of China, 2000; Zeng, 2000)

On August 22-23, after Japanese aircraft wantonly bombed the city, they once again focused special bombing on cultural districts. On August 22, Wang Shijie notes in his diary: "80 enemy aircraft have hit Shapingba district; Central University was shot into dozens of pieces; the damage sustained was huge. Gu Mengyu happened to take over Central University on the very same day." (Wang, 2013) Wang Zizhuang also writes in his diary on that same day: "The enemy deliberately destroys educational institutions; that is evident. Today Gu Mengyu was to become the President of Central University, it's said that traitor Wang didn't support Gu's appointment and, on the contrary, supported the enemy's attack." (Institute of Modern History, Central Research Academy, 2001; Wang, 2001) An eyewitness who was a professor at Central University, Chang Renxia confirms in his diary: On August 23,

In the last two days, we have seen the enemy specifically bomb cultural districts, wantonly and cruelly, in an outrageous way. The school has been burned down. There are those at school who have been burned; others have been bombed with no survivors, like those living in the fifth faculty dormitory which was collapsed, as the heavens are my witness. (Chang, 1999)

On August 24, "The enemy burned down everything all around a small restaurant, so that there is nowhere you can eat; the faculty canteen also bombed, so that students and teachers, all eat standing outside." (Ibid.)

On August 30, 175 Japanese aircraft mobilized and attacked Chongqing, dropping 480 bombs setting a record for the greatest number of planes mobilized and bombs dropped in a single day during the bombing of Chongqing. On the day of the bombing, not even Chiang Kai-Shek's residence at Yellow Mountain on the outskirts of the city was spared. Wang Shijie writes in his diary this day:

Today, more than two hundred enemy aircraft hit Sichuan; More than 160 entered Chongqing city and its suburbs; The South bank of Huang Juezhen and Mt. Nan and such areas were all bombed. The enemy suddenly bombed the Yellow Mountain area, en masse, with the Chiang residence as their main objective. (Wang, 2013)

The diary of Tang Zong also confirms:



Two hundred enemy aircraft in ten groups struck, bombing the Ceng Jianyan and Daxigou. Three bombs also fell into the attendants' room indoor, the front door of committee's office was bombed but it did not go off. Yellow mountain was also bombed. Squad leader Tang of the guards and the plainclothes guards were martyrs, with more than ten people injured. (The Ministry of Public Security Archives, 1991; Tang, 1991)

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## CONCLUSION

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Faced with the tragic bombing that lasted from August 8-14, 1941 Zeng Xubai write in his diary for the week:

Beginning with August 8 and ending with August 14, the enemy has continuously bombed day and night, without a break... Colleagues and so on hid from air raids for eighty hours; one can see that they are exhausted; also the residences and office premises are destroyed or ruined and we are stricken with poor working conditions. On the one hand, the remaining buildings are being reallocate to colleagues, and on the other, the Governor General's Administration Division is rushing day and night to build grass cottages. We rest between alerts and encourage our colleagues to continue to stay on the job. We dispatch a compilation of English language press releases daily. The foreign affairs section assists foreign reporters in their activities without cease; during the bombing, the volume of telegrams to the outside is many times greater than usual. The division that receives enemy broadcast can receive them from the enemy just as before; the photography department all immediately goes out to photograph or film the situation after each bombing; they are particularly diligent. Every comrade in this environment of hardship, has an unrelenting work ethic, which is quite gratifying. (Second Historical Archives of China, 2000; Zeng, 2000)

On August 30, the most violent day of the war since the bombing began, Wang Zizhuang writes in his diary: "Bombs dropped near the Nationalist Government Great Hall, this was the first direct hit, which the enemy has been seeking for several year. Memorial events and important meetings were held here weekly; the enemy dropped many bombs in the vicinity in hopes of hitting it, and finally got it, which was not easy to do. We have already decided to use the most rapid repair methods to complete repairs; out next memorial week will still be held here. No matter what, the enemy cannot stop us! Remembrance Week was this Monday and Mr. Chiang reported, based on enemy intelligence, that the ten day and night bombing has done more harm than good to the enemy because they have wasted more oil than we; we just hope that the enemy will have fewer foolish acts like this. Looked at from the perspective of today's large bombing, the enemy has not the wherewithal, but will not know they're mistaken until they're dead." (Institute of Modern History, Central Research Academy, 2001; Wang, 2001) Even after suffering the great tunnel tragedy, and the bombing of Chongqing from August 8-14, the will of the army and people of Chongqing were unshaken by the Japanese "Operation 102."

During the "fatigue bombing," the soldiers and civilians of Chongqing exhibited a spirit of total war. The national government in the book, "Sichuan's War of Resistance against Japan," summarized it thusly: "the spirit of Chongqing under the Japanese bombing" and spoke highly of it:

I, a Chongqing resident, during a few years of wanton bombing by the enemy, still fought, was indomitable, and fully demonstrated the spirit of the war until the end. Chinese and foreign people were witness to this; everyone praises this "Chongqing spirit"; in fact, it represented and symbolized the fighting spirit of the entire Chinese nation. This was the reason we finally achieved final victory in was due to the role played by this Chongqing spirit. (Zhou,1971)

The book further points out: "The spirit of Chongqing under the wanton bombing of the enemy was not just a symbol of the Chinese nations to resistance to brutality; it became 'a symbol of the spirit of struggle' against national aggression in the world." (Ibid.) "Chongqing spirit" indeed also won wide international respect. 1944, US President Roosevelt sent a special envoy to the people of Chongqing to deliver a scroll, the full Chinese translation of which is as follows:

I, on behalf of my people, send my with compliments to Chongqing this scroll in order to demonstrate my admiration for the people's steadfast calmness and unconquered spirit as the city suffered an unprecedented raid. This is proof enough that terrorism cannot destroy the spirit of a nation fighting for freedom. We can clearly see the spirit of fighting for freedom and this spirit later generations unto perpetuity. (Wang, 2007)

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