

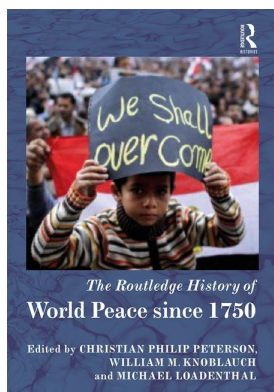
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### **The International Peace Campaign, China, and Transnational Activism at the Outset of World War II**

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## THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE CAMPAIGN, CHINA, AND TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM AT THE OUTSET OF WORLD WAR II

*Ke Ren*

This chapter examines the organization and operations of the International Peace Campaign (IPC) or *Rassemblement universel pour la Paix* (RUP) and its China National Committee during the 1930s and the first years of the Second Sino–Japanese War (1937–1945), a key theatre of World War II. Established in 1936 and encompassing forty-three member states, the IPC/RUP became a major anti-fascist movement organized by British and French activists. Despite its importance, most histories of peace efforts in the 1930s only comment briefly on the laudable but ultimately ephemeral nature of the organization’s efforts in challenging the rise of fascism and endorsing collective security under the League of Nations framework. Some suggest that it ultimately proved to be a disruptive force, creating organizational problems for such established peace groups as the League of Nations Unions (LNU) in Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Concerned with the IPC’s failure to help prevent the fall of the Spanish Republic, most scholars have overlooked the organization’s activities in China. Yet the IPC’s response to Japanese aggression in China and the evolution of its China National Committee illustrates the global scope and dilemmas of peace activism in the interwar years.

This chapter provides a more comprehensive study of the IPC/RUP and its transnational activism, especially in China. Following the outbreak of the Second Sino–Japanese War in 1937, the IPC sponsored several peace conferences, including the World Conference for the Boycott of Japan and Aid to China, as well as the World Conference for Action on the Bombardment of Open Towns and the Restoration of Peace—to push its agenda of supporting the League of Nations and collective security. In China, a National Committee of the IPC was formally established in 1938; it eventually included over a dozen provincial and municipal committees and more than one million affiliate members. By holding local conferences and rallies, expanding into the interior and countryside, and publishing research monographs on international issues, the Chinese IPC informed the public of the international situation, galvanized the domestic population to resist Japanese aggression, and engaged in “civilian diplomacy” with Western nations. An analysis of the IPC’s various conference proceedings, as well as archival sources and contemporary publications, shows that the activities of the IPC and its China National Committee represented a key arena of transnational civic activism in the early years of World War II. On the one hand, the messages of the IPC reached across national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries to confront

different forms of fascist aggression; on the other hand, distinct methods of propaganda and mobilization, as well as a restructuring effort, allowed the China branch to successfully adapt the international movement in its national setting. Specifically, the Chinese branch of the IPC rebranded itself as a national organization of an international *anti-aggression* movement, thus providing a rationale for China's war of resistance against Japanese invasion as a defense war fought not only for China's independence but also in the name of "international peace, justice, and order."<sup>2</sup> In the end, while the IPC and its China branch succeeded in organizing a series of international congresses and local rallies against fascist aggression, the movement exemplified the kind of "pragmatic pacifism," as suggested by David Cortright, that finds acceptable use of force in defense of justice or a greater peace.<sup>3</sup> The experience of the IPC in China thus contributes to our understanding of the transformation of transnational peace movements as global agendas become embedded in realistic local contexts.

### **Origins of the International Peace Campaign**

The IPC or RUP was born out of a perceived "growing disillusionment" with the lack of "cohesion amongst the peace forces" in the wake of the 1935 Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia).<sup>4</sup> Activists from Britain and France established the IPC/RUP as an umbrella organization to coordinate peace movements around the world.<sup>5</sup> Lord Robert Cecil led the British movement (1864–1958). Aristocratic and conservative, Cecil headed the League of Nations Union (LNU) and helped organize the successful British Peace Ballot in 1934–1935, which indicated widespread support for the League and its goals of collective security. In France, Pierre Cot (1895–1977) led the RUP. An Aviation Minister and radical leader in the Popular Front government, under Cot the RUP's association with the French Popular Front left suspicions of being a Communist-led organization; conversely, the IPC was set up as a broad, all-encompassing movement comprised of political parties, religious orientations, social organizations, and numerous nationalities.<sup>6</sup> The basic requirement for member organizations was strict adherence to its core principles, the Four Points:

1. Recognition of the sanctity of Treaty obligations;
2. Reduction and limitations of armaments by international agreement and suppression of profit from the manufacture of armaments;
3. Strengthening of the League of Nations for the prevention and stopping of war by the more effective organization of Collective Security and Mutual Assistance; and
4. Establishment within the framework of the League of Nations of effective machinery for the remedying by peaceful means of international conditions that might lead to wars.<sup>7</sup>

These principles, which supported the League and the use of sanctions against aggressive nations, suggested, as a later memo noted, that the basic goal of the IPC was to reinforce collective security and "to secure a common effort of education and propaganda by all national and international organisations which could agree to co-operate on the basis of a policy for Peace."<sup>8</sup>

The Four Points also served as the basis for the World Peace Congress. Held in Brussels September 3–6, 1936, and attended by over 4,000 representatives from thirty-five countries and forty different international organizations, the Brussels Congress officially inaugurated

the IPC/RUP. Thereafter, the IPC strove to maintain an inclusive stance, establishing specialized commissions on agriculture, churches, veterans, sports, trade unions, women, and youth. Delegates from other internationalist and pacifist groups such as the International Federation of League of Nations Societies, the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, also attended the Congress. These disparate groups all agreed that militarization, rearmament, and violations of the League's covenant in recent years increased the threat of war; therefore, the IPC sought to establish a common platform so that various national and local committees could influence public opinion and government policy.<sup>9</sup> The congress envisioned a widespread alliance and co-operation between these different groups so as to organize peace meetings, exhibitions of posters and films, national and local demonstrations, and the establishment of an International Peace Fund. Through these coordinated mass activities, the IPC hoped to rally "together all nations and all races for the defence of peace."<sup>10</sup>

Cohering just as the Spanish Civil War was breaking out, the IPC quickly found ripe opportunities to make use of popular campaigns and symbolic forms of protest, such as the Peace Pavilion that was erected at the 1937 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Exhibited alongside Picasso's *Guernica*, the Peace Pavilion displayed photos of horrors of war, including recent atrocities in Spain.<sup>11</sup> While the war in Spain commanded the attention of the IPC, China, which had become embroiled in a national struggle against Japanese aggression, also became a major focal point, as evident from a series of world conferences and transnational peace campaign activities organized in Europe in 1938, as well as the expansion and mobilization of the China National Committee.<sup>12</sup>

### **“Save China, Save Peace”**

China's initial involvement in the International Peace Campaign illustrates the complex politics of appeasement and resistance in the 1930s. In 1936, shortly after the Brussels congress had been planned, the IPC sent a representative to seek Chinese participation in the group. A short time thereafter, activists from the All-China National Salvation Association, a group of journalists and professionals who agitated for a strong stance toward Japanese aggression in China since the 1931 Manchuria crisis, formed a Provisionary Committee for the China Branch of the IPC. While the IPC always sought to influence national governments, the fourteen Chinese representatives who attended the congress in Brussels were mostly civil dissidents who were critical of the Chinese Nationalist government. These included the exiled writer and political activist Shelley Wang Lixi, General Chen Mingshu, who had led the Nineteenth Army's defense of Shanghai against a Japanese attack in 1932, and several Chinese students and laborers residing in Europe. The delegation was headed by the progressive educator Tao Xingzhi. None of these figures had the support of Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nationalist government, who had been pursuing a policy of appeasing the Japanese in order to buy time to suppress his rivals, the Mao-led Communists. Indeed, Chen and Wang had been involved in a rebellion in 1933 against Chiang, and Tao was a key member of the National Salvation Association. In his opening session speech at the congress, Shelley Wang noted that a "popular front" of "intellectuals, youth, workers, peasants, patriotic capitalists and progressive political parties" had formed in China and stood ready to wage a campaign for national independence and world peace through collective security and mutual assistance.<sup>13</sup> That the above efforts were undertaken by National Salvation activists suggests a high degree of civic commitment to transnational

activism before the Chinese Nationalist government ever began sponsoring the Chinese branch of the IPC.

Despite his insistence on a policy of “first internal pacification, then external resistance,” Chiang Kai-shek could not hold off the conflict against Japan for very long. In December 1936, two of Chiang’s generals kidnapped him and forced him to agree to form a united front with the Chinese Communists to resist Japanese aggression. Six months later, under the pretense of a military skirmish outside of Beijing, Japan invaded China, which in effect started World War II in Asia.<sup>14</sup>

In response, a sizable aid-China movement emerged in Europe. Both the British left and the wider public responded to Japan’s attacks on China with a propaganda campaign to educate the public about the war and a general boycott of Japanese goods. These efforts were interconnected with the newly formed China Campaign Committee (CCC), a cross-party alliance that frequently coordinated with the IPC’s British National Committee.<sup>15</sup> Many British writers and politicians who supported the Spanish Republic also became actively involved in CCC or IPC sponsored rallies. The fiery leftist and antifascist MP Ellen Wilkinson, for instance, was one of the speakers at the CCC’s inaugural public meeting, and Arthur Clegg recalled that she “wept as she denounced the bombing of civilians.”<sup>16</sup>

In linking China’s war of resistance to the Spanish cause, the IPC and its supporters continued to emphasize the idea of collective security to prevent the outbreak of world war. In 1938, it organized a series of mass demonstrations throughout Great Britain on the theme of “Collective Security—The People’s Answer to Dictators.” A rally of 50,000 gathered in Trafalgar Square on March 13, while 6,000 came out to a football club in Leeds to hear prominent IPC activists speak on the necessity of supporting the Spanish government. The Arts Peace Campaign (APC), formed by a group of writers and artists, also produced a song for the IPC to use in its events.<sup>17</sup>

The most influential meeting organized by the IPC in early 1938, however, was the World Conference on the Boycott of Japan and Aid to China, organized in response to Japan’s full-scale invasion of China in 1937. Held at the British Industries House on Oxford Street, this conference was attended by 800 representatives from twenty-five different countries and international organizations. The halls were filled with posters that read “Save China, Save Peace” and “The People Can Stop the War” and the sessions culminated in a packed rally at the Royal Opera House and Adelphi Theatre at Covent Garden, with such eminent speakers as Lord Cecil, Lord Lytton, the suffragist Sylvia Pankhurst, London County Council leader Herbert Morrison, and the Chinese Ambassador to France, Wellington Koo. The conference itself was divided into different commissions, which came up with strong resolutions that demonstrate a consistent emphasis on coordinating IPC activities with those of other international organizations. For instance, the Trade Union commission called for the IPC and its national committees to follow the example of the International Federation of Trade Unions in supporting the Japan boycott and publicizing trade union efforts on China’s behalf. Meanwhile, the Parliamentary Commission not only pledged to pressure individual governments to place an embargo on Japan, but also refused to recognize any Japanese-established puppet government in China, taking a stand for the full restoration of China’s territorial sovereignty.<sup>18</sup>

A Technical Commission exhaustively examined statistics on Japanese imports and exports and concluded that it was “an incontestable fact that the British Empire and the United States, together with the Dutch Indies, France, and Russia, have the economic means of

preventing the success of Japan's aggression." It argued that the Western "democratic" powers could significantly stem Japan's expansionary efforts by "refusing war supplies, financial facilities and purchasing power to Japan." The commission also urged the Western governments to provide "every assistance to China," including loans, credits, and supplies.<sup>19</sup> To facilitate boycott activities, it recommended that goods coming from Japan should be identified by country of origin.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the Propaganda Commission considered the coordination of identical posters and other publicity material and asked that a Central News Agency be established by the government with IPC support in China. Such a move, it argued, would facilitate the transmission of information between China and the boycotting countries in ways that better educated the public and facilitated mass mobilization.<sup>21</sup> Through these resolutions, the IPC conference refined a comprehensive platform for peace activists and aid-China groups worldwide. Along with emphasizing the legitimacy of boycott campaigns and embargoes against Japan on the grounds of international law and economic calculations, the IPC also advocated that Western governments give up their non-intervention policies and supply the Chinese defensive weapons.

The months following the "Save China, Save Peace" conference saw a flurry of activities by the IPC and its collaborators as they continued to protest in the name of collective security and an "indivisible peace" that included Spain and China. "Peace Weeks" and exhibitions organized by the IPC and LNU were regularly held throughout Britain in places such as Wakefield, Stroud, Oswestry, and Sheffield, while the RUP in France organized provincial demonstrations in Rouen and Bordeaux, where 8,000 people came to discuss events in Spain and China. And, in a move anticipating trouble later in the year, a 500-delegate strong IPC national congress was held in Prague, which included both the Czechoslovak and German Social Democratic Parties, as well as numerous trade union groups, national associations, and representatives from Britain and France.<sup>22</sup> These activities are a testament to both the widespread grassroots reach of the IPC and its consistent emphasis on the collective security agenda.

In addition to holding rallies, the IPC also had several grand plans for further events to build transnational connections. In response to the demands of Scandinavian and Balkan delegates, it organized a Preparatory Peasant Peace Conference for February 5–6, 1938. Convening in Geneva, this preliminary conference gathered representatives from twelve different countries, including China, to "consider the activity of peasants for peace and what steps could and should be taken to inform peasants upon international affairs" and to coordinate peasant action.<sup>23</sup> Other plans included the creation of an International Staff School, which would be responsible for studying international law and world economic problems. The IPC also envisioned holding an international press Conference and a World Economic Peace Conference that would investigate matters related to international trade and start creating a charter of international economic collaboration.<sup>24</sup> Even if some of these plans never came to fruition, they nevertheless reflect the organization's active agenda. In mid-1938, the IPC succeeded in organizing another important international meeting, the World Conference for Action on the Bombardment of Open Towns and the Restoration of Peace, held in Paris on July 23–24.

One of the most urgent issues for peace activists in the late 1930s was the devastation, especially brought on civilians, by the strategic bombing campaigns conducted by the German and Italian forces in Spain and the Japanese in China. In organizing a large-scale international conference, the IPC not only proposed a series of resolutions to protest aerial bombings and to provide aid to victims, but once again linked the two conflicts together in

bringing awareness to a type of destructive warfare that would come to define some of the most atrocious acts during WWII.<sup>25</sup>

Japan had already employed aerial warfare in its brief attack on Shanghai in January 1932, provoking strong reactions from the British.<sup>26</sup> By 1937–1938, with the bombing of key cities such as Canton and Shanghai, news and images of the destruction caught the attention of Western activists who were already aware of the Italian *Aviazione Legionaria* and German Condor Legion's bombing of the Spanish cities of Bilbao and Guernica. As information trickled in about Japanese campaigns in China, it soon became apparent that the devastation was even worse than in Spain. A film, *Bombs on China*, was shown at a mass protest meeting at the Royal Albert Hall in October 1937.<sup>27</sup> By June 1938, Edgar Mowrer, the *Chicago Daily News* reporter and IPC correspondent in China, cabled reports of daily bombardments from Kaifeng that noted the destruction of American, Canadian, and Italian churches.<sup>28</sup> In a telegram sent to the IPC that same month, the mayor of Guangzhou remarked that between May 28 and June 8, the Japanese conducted no less than twenty air raids, resulting in 2,000 deaths and wounding 5,500 other civilians. When the Nationalist government relocated to the interior city of Chongqing, Japanese bombers conducted a continuous and deliberate campaign over four years, with more than 9,500 planes dropping 21,600 bombs between February 1938 and August 1943, resulting in more than 15,000 deaths.<sup>29</sup> This extensive and sustained kind of aerial warfare was unprecedented, especially in its indiscriminate targeting of military and civilian infrastructure and personnel. For the organizers of the IPC conference, it was nothing less than “aerial terrorism.”<sup>30</sup>

Recognizing the “unprecedented savagery” of the aggressors, the IPC put together the 1938 Paris World Conference to discuss methods of influencing governments and public opinion against the bombings and strategies for providing relief for the victims.<sup>31</sup> Over 1,000 delegates from thirty-four countries attended the conference. Headlining the gathering were the leaders of the IPC and its various national committees, including Henry Atkinson of the American committee and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches; Martinez Barrio, the Vice-President of the Spanish Republic who also led the Spanish IPC; and Jawaharlal Nehru, who was the President of the IPC in India. The opening session concluded with the showing of a propaganda film titled *Martyred Towns*, the voiceover narration of which connected the bombings in Spain and China to the earlier aggressions in Manchuria and Abyssinia. The narrator argued that even though the failure to uphold collective security led to these aerial atrocities, supporting the IPC could help the victims and prevent further carnage.<sup>32</sup>

Most of the deliberations at the conference took place in two commissions. Along with pledging to intensify both campaigns for relief and loan assistance to China and for boycotting Japanese goods, the Commission on Open Bombardment also called for Western governments to remove bans on supplying weapons to China to defend against air attacks as well as an embargo on the supply of petrol, metal, and financial aid to Japan and the aggressors in Spain. Furthermore, it resolved to pressure governments to help organize the evacuation of refugees in Spain and China through the creation of transportation services. It also called on members to organize campaigns in individual nations to ensure that delegates would discuss these measures at the League of Nations assembly in September 1938. The IPC also proposed to send representative delegations of eye-witnesses to report for the public the “facts of the bombardment of civil populations.” Meanwhile, the Food Supplies commission resolved to establish a World Commission for Aiding Peoples Who are Victims of Aggression, with Spanish and Chinese sections, in collaboration with such organizations such as the

Spanish National Committee for Centralized Aid. Besides supporting measures that required the cooperation of national governments, the conference also called for immediate voluntary measures such as the dispatch of food supplies and, for China, the establishment of an International Peace Hospital.<sup>33</sup>

Some of these proposed measures began to take effect over time. In August 1938, the French government suspended the export of iron ore and manganese (via Indo-China) to Japan.<sup>34</sup> Later that year, the IPC sent as its delegate the feminist and antifascist writer Charlotte Haldane to China to investigate the wartime conditions of Chinese women and children. Haldane brought with her both aid and medicine from Britain and France, and more importantly, helped facilitate collaboration between the IPC and the China Defense League led by Song Qingling. These joint efforts resulted in the founding of an “International Peace Hospital of Wutaishan” in north China under the directorship of Canadian doctor Norman Bethune, who had recently come to China from the battlefields of Spain.<sup>35</sup> The IPC and the CCC supported the International Peace Hospital through creative fundraisers such as a “China Bazaar,” held on December 9–10 in Livingstone Hall. At this “Bazaar,” Chinese porcelain, lacquer, hand-embroidered silk, fans, and dolls were sold as Christmas gifts, with the proceeds going to the hospital and its attached refugee camp.<sup>36</sup>

### **The China National Committee**

By mid-1938, the IPC was not only mobilizing support for China on an international level, but was also represented by a newly restructured Chinese National Committee. This reorganized affiliate took advantage of the more liberal political environment under the United Front between the Nationalists and Communists to extend its operations and engage in organized campaigns to support the national resistance effort. On January 23, an expansion meeting, designed to increase membership and reach of the IPC was held at the General Chamber of Commerce in Hankou. Attended by over 5,000 representatives from a variety of social groups, including workers, farmers, merchants, academics, soldiers, and women, the meeting passed a new charter outlining the structure and work of the revamped organization. It also issued several resolutions calling for strict sanctions against Japan and appealing for international support for China.<sup>37</sup>

In the process of the restructuring, the China Branch (the Chinese name of the national organization) underwent a significant change. As Shao Lizi, the Chinese Minister of Information and vice-president of the China National Committee, noted, to avoid implying that China would settle for a compromised peace under the control of a stronger military power—and to show that they were determined to achieve a long-lasting peace based on principles of international law and justice—the Chinese organizers decided to rename the IPC in China as the “International Anti-Aggression Campaign” (*Guoji fanqinlie yundong dahui*).<sup>38</sup> The term “anti-aggression” signaled that the China National Committee operated under the state of war of legitimate self-defense, one fought in the name of peace in East Asia and the whole world, and called for the international community to recognize the legitimacy of China’s struggle.<sup>39</sup> This was also consistent with the IPC’s stance, for at the 1938 Paris conference, the IPC had pledged to “oppose any attempt at a settlement inconsistent with the preservation of the independence and integrity of China.”<sup>40</sup>

Does this restructuring also suggest that the China National Committee had been subsumed under the control of the Nationalist (GMD) government? A confidential report submitted to the Ministry of Information by the Special Propaganda Committee of the GMD Ministry



of Information in September 1938 reveals that the IPC had been identified as an international organization that was the “most forceful” and “capable of actively supporting our resistance efforts.”<sup>41</sup> As early as 1934, the GMD government had formulated a “Plan for Expanding International Propaganda” and had practiced a great deal of “public diplomacy” through Chinese resident agents in the United States.<sup>42</sup> Yet while the Nationalist representatives in Europe may have engaged in similar propaganda activities, it would be difficult to encapsulate all of the work of the China Branch under the same rubric; during the two years after its reorganization, the IPC in China grew to encompass 126 affiliate domestic organizations and over one million members.<sup>43</sup> This successful localization and expansion depended not only on government sponsorship but also on the active support of many prominent non-party intellectuals, the participation of a variety of social and professional groups, and the voluntarism of an increasing number of provincial and regional sub-branches.

As an international movement aimed at mobilizing mass support for peace, the IPC always viewed its own replication and reproduction at the national and local levels as an urgent task. The French president of the RUP, Pierre Cot, emphasized at the Brussels Congress the importance of achieving “organization” and “universality.” Practically speaking, for the China Branch this meant establishing a meticulous structure for the national organization and founding numerous provincial and regional centers across the country, especially in non-Japanese occupied areas where the urgency of anti-aggression, the international situation, and the ideals of the IPC and the League of Nations could be disseminated among the local population. On a more complex level, achieving universality meant reaching out to different subgroups across class, gender, political, and religious boundaries, while also attaining the enthusiastic support of influential public figures.<sup>44</sup>

According to the 1938 Charter of the China National Committee, the expanded organization included a General Council of 150 members, a Standing Committee of twenty-three members chosen from the Council, and a Board of Honorary Chairmen of seventy-seven members. The Council was nominated from prominent party and military figures as well as politicians, and the honorary chairs were elected to lend prestige to the national organization. While the council oversaw the annual meetings, it was the standing committee that was responsible for the day-to-day operations. To ensure expediency, its tasks were further delegated to an Executive Department supported by three committees: Organization, Propaganda, and Research, signifying the three main categories of activities undertaken by the China National Committee.<sup>45</sup>

In terms of organization, two levels of local branches would be formed: Provincial centers located in major cities and regional branches located in key counties. The guidelines for establishing local groups also stipulated that in order to achieve maximum influence, organizers should seek approval from local notables in the party, politics, and military sectors, as well as support from local elites.<sup>46</sup>

Following these guidelines, the Chinese IPC extended its activities by setting up a county branch in Sichuan in March 1938. After the fall of Wuhan in October 1938, the IPC leaders followed the national government in its retreat to the interior wartime capital of Chongqing. Along the way, it held “tea meetings” with local leaders and established provincial centers in Guangxi and Guizhou. By 1940, there were provincial centers in nine major cities and numerous regional branches. These local subsidiaries of the Chinese IPC worked both independently and in coordination with the national organization to produce their own print materials, newsletters, and pamphlets, and pursued propaganda efforts at the regional level.<sup>47</sup>

Propaganda in the service of mass mobilization towards the anti-aggression effort constituted perhaps the most important IPC activity. In the multimedia campaign to raise awareness of the importance of anti-aggression and of China's place in the international movement, the Chinese IPC resorted to using many forms of wartime "popular culture"—spoken dramas, cartoons, and popular songs—methods of mass mobilization that were accessible for the less literate or politically aware masses.<sup>48</sup> Leading intellectuals wrote songs to laud the anti-aggression efforts.<sup>49</sup> The national committee also commissioned over forty cartoons to be shown to various segments of society.<sup>50</sup> One successful strategy was the deployment of a "mobile propaganda team," which left Chongqing in October 1939 to visit a number of interior townships along the Yangtze River, at each stop exhibiting photos of international aid-China efforts, slogans, cartoons, signed messages, IPC publications, and drawing large crowds in the process.<sup>51</sup>

Leading members of the China National Committee also sought to mobilize the masses by staging rallies of various ethnic or religious groups. General Bai Chongxi, a hero of anti-Japanese campaigns in central China, also headed the Chinese Muslim National Salvation Association. A frequent contributor to the China Branch's official biweekly journal *Anti-Aggression*, Bai wrote many editorials exhorting his Muslim constituency to resist Japanese invaders who disturbed world peace; he also helped to organize an Islamic Anti-Aggression Rally held in Hankou.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the Buddhist reformer Taixu and head of the China Buddhist Studies Society, spoke at China IPC meetings of the connection between practicing an ethical and "humanistic" Buddhism and the international antifascist and peace movements.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, a third leg of the China Branch of RUP/IPC's work was the task of "researching international problems and expanding mass understanding of international affairs. A special Research Committee was formed to coordinate and develop these efforts. The products of this more intellectual side of the organization could be seen in the articles written in the biweekly journal *Anti-Aggression*, the booklets of lectures or recorded discussions, and the lengthy monographs printed by the China National Committee. These various publications carried titles such as *The European Situation and the Problem of East Asia*, *A New Study of the League of Nations*, and *International Order and the Three People's Principles*. Written by China IPC standing committee members who had backgrounds in law and political science, these analytical writings reveal a more deliberative, intellectual side of the China National Committee's activities. If the media campaigns and rallies were geared at galvanizing the masses in the war against Japanese aggression, these elite publications represented a collective and insistent effort to link China's national struggle to the larger world war and the international order as defined by the ideals of the League of Nations.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

The continued activism of the China National Committee suggests that the International Peace Campaign had not simply "flared brightly for a couple of years but foundered on the shoals of the Spanish civil war and the mounting threat of world war."<sup>55</sup> For one thing, the situation in China by late 1937 and early 1938 was one of all-out war and one that would quickly become linked to the larger global struggle known as World War II. At the international level, the IPC's world conferences in support of China and Spain brought attention to the common threats of fascism and the Berlin-Tokyo-Rome Axis; it also supported boycotts and economic sanctions against aggressor nations while presenting strong

criticisms of the Western powers that followed a policy of appeasement and non-intervention. Additionally, the conference to protest the bombardment of open towns was also prescient in decrying the “aerial terrorism” of WWII, the examples of which would come to include not only Guernica, Canton, and Chongqing, but also Coventry, Dresden, Tokyo, and of course, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To a certain extent, these activities and concerns also foreshadowed the transnational disarmament and anti-nuclear movements that would emerge in the postwar and Cold War period.

In China, the successful localization and mobilization of various social groups under the umbrella of the IPC/RUP, including the continued promotion of its key principles of collective security and a sustained intellectual interest in China’s connections with the League of Nations reveals that the IPC served as an important channel of internationalism between Europe and East Asia in the early years of WWII. Yet, as we have seen, while discursively echoing the pacifist agenda in pre-1939 Europe, the IPC’s national branch in China already had to adapt to a situation in which a full-scale war of resistance had broken out. Thus, as David Cortright and Peter Farrugia have pointed out, the IPC and its connections to Spain and China also embodied the increasingly conflicting ideals of collective security and pacifism in the late 1930s.<sup>56</sup> In the case of China, where “peace” could be construed as appeasement or collaboration with the invading Japanese, it was a justified defensive war in the name of anti-fascism and anti-aggression—for the sake of both national independence and an unconditional world peace—that won the argument of the day among proponents of the IPC. The transnational movement in the name of collective security would continue and even expand in the China theater, but in the context of a justified armed struggle for national survival and against the spread of fascism in East Asia. The story of the IPC and its China National Committee thus at once expands the scope of our understanding of internationalist antifascist efforts in the 1930s and cautions against any narrow understanding of peace movements in WWII. The IPC, like many other peace efforts in the interwar era, may have been ultimately unable to prevent or lessen the violence of the war.<sup>57</sup> However, in upholding the League of Nations framework, recognizing universal principles of peace and anti-aggression, and mobilizing mass support across social groups, the IPC and its China Branch nevertheless exemplified a considerable transnational effort to link European and Asian antifascist movements.

### Notes

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