

## War in China - 1939 (2\_33)

### Russian meet Japanese for duel

The development of extreme winter weather of 1939/40 from the North Pole down to the middle latitudes all over the northern hemisphere, may have received some contribution from the Far East as well. With less water in the air, the arctic air more easily could move south. North America wondered what had caused the unusual dry air in November 1939. (NYT, 7 January 1940).

At the time WWII started in Europe, the Chinese-Japanese undeclared military conflict was already in its thirty-second month. By February 1940, more than 4 Million people had died and another 5 Million had been wounded. (NYT, 11 February 1940). This fighting should not be ignored while studying anthropogenic weather changes, although there is little scope to pay much attention to this distant scenario. It would certainly be difficult to pinpoint “major activities” that may have had an impact on the atmosphere. Actually in 1939 a major flood occurred in China. A vast area in the North China Plain was submerged, and the water in the streets in Tianjin (120 km south-east of Beijing) was two meters deep, so that boats were the only means of transport for upwards of two months. It is claimed that the deaths-toll was 20,000.



In 1939 artillery barrage, troops charging and daily bombing had become deadly routine in China for many months. What role did the war machinery on China's soil played in making the flooding happen? This question needs to be answered one day.

In this context the encounter between Russia and Japan in autumn 1939 (NYT, 17 September 1939) should also be mentioned here. Only ten days before WWII started, on 20 August 1939, the Red Army with

100,000 troops went into combat with the Japanese Army comprising 70,000 soldiers (Kwantung Army) at Nomonham, a place on the boarder between Outer Mongolia and Manchuku in fine weather<sup>1</sup>.

The Soviet forces had brought with them more than 400 tanks, 200 heavy guns, 400 armoured cars, 500-700 planes and several thousand tons of ammunition, shells and bombs to the Far East, over a distance of 3,000

<sup>1</sup> Coox

kilometres. Presumably not less military equipment would have been available for the Kwantung Army, which eventually was the loser in this event with 20,000 men dead, when the truce was signed on September 16. The Soviet's use of massive tanks and their superior military tactics proved successful. Both sides suffered considerable losses. The weather also may have contributed to the losses. This continental region is usually relatively dry. One wonders whether the air had become 'drier' during several days of fighting. Two brief reports quoted by Coox<sup>2</sup> may serve as an illustration:

- Rain had been coming down for days, and on the night of 9<sup>th</sup> September, weather became very cold, wind became gusty, and snow fell hard. Some progress was seen on the bridge by the early afternoon on the 9<sup>th</sup>, but as the storm intensified, the river current quickened and water rose to two and a half meters.
- On 10 September: 'Firing by the infantry began at 6 a.m. followed by an artillery duel. Five hours later, rain changed to snow again, and it grew intensely cold'.

This happened in a region, which generally saw little rain. The contribution by war on "rain forcing" was presumably very small with no impact outside the combat zone. But by mid September 1939 with WWII already two weeks old with Poland almost doomed, a several hundred kilometres defence lines activated between the English Channel and North Sea to Switzerland, above average rain fell in central Europe (A) It seems reasonable to ask whether this event in Europe has had a direct link to lack of rain in the USA, as the NYT (8 October 1939) reported under the headline "Wheat Belt Frets as Rains Hold Off". At the same time California and Arizona had had very high precipitation (370% and 335% above normal during September). But for this, it might be reasonable to link the impact of war activities in Europe to lack of rain in the USA. (B)

Further details: (A) Rain-Making, 2\_31; (B) USA dried out, 2\_32.

### **Effect of record cold January on War in China**

The war in China saw many battles in late 1939. In January 1940 very cold air crept in from the North. The following newspaper reports illustrate the event as under:

- CHUNGKING, China, January 23, 1940 – The Chinese claimed an important victory over Japanese forces north of Hupeh today. A Japanese column of 20,000 men advancing northwards from Suihsien, was said to have been crushed at Kaocheng by frontal attacks. Meanwhile snow blankets cover most of the battlefields and record cold weather is gripping most parts of China.

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<sup>2</sup> Coox

- HONK KONG, January 23, 1940 (AP) – In battles fought in pelting snowstorms and bitter cold, the Chinese reported today that they had repulsed a Japanese attack near Chaocheng in Western Shantung Province, foiled a Japanese attempt to break through their lines in Northern Hupeh Province, and dynamited two trains carrying Japanese troops in Shantung.
- SHANGHAI, January 23, 1940 – More than 650 bodies of homeless beggars and refugees who perished overnight in freezing cold and from malnutrition were found in Shanghai's streets and vacant lots during the last four days of intense cold. More than 450 of these victims are babies or small children. All parts of China reported unusually harsh weather, with snow falling in some districts where it was unknown for twenty years. Due to poverty and homelessness of millions of refugees, based on Shanghai figures, the civilian toll consequent to the cold wave was estimated at about 65,000.
- HONG KONG, January 23, 1940 (AP) – The cold wave had extended today to China's southernmost provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi. In Changsha, capital of Hunan Province, the weather was described as the worst in twenty years. A blinding snowstorm swept Lanchow (Lanzhou), capital of Kansu, where the cold was said to be the severest in China.



And the undeclared war went on. Early in February 1940 the Chinese amassed 400,000 troops at Nansing and fought a 10-day battle suffering heavy losses with about 40,000 dead and 80,000 wounded. (NYT, 08 February 1940).

### Few Events in China in late 1939

2 October 1939; "...that since the Japan-Soviet armistice on the Manchukuo border numerous columns of Russian troops have been entering Sinkiang Province using highways connecting Urumchi with Trans-Siberian Railway. Some reports, which are causing alarm in Japanese military circles, declare that the Soviet Union already has nearly 300,000 armed men inside Sinkiang. ...During the last two months immense war supplies and a number of airplanes from the Soviet reached China,...". (NYT, 3 October 1939). Japan claims to have crushed 19 Chinese divisions; which left Chinese with 10,000 dead on the field. The Chinese estimated that 20,000 Japanese had been killed or wounded in the last two weeks. (NYT, ditto).

28 December 1939; 100 Japanese airplanes raided the city of Lanchow for three days in the biggest air attack since hostilities started 30 months ago. Lanchow, is an important centre on the supply route from Soviet Russia to Chungking. (NYT, 29 December 1939).

28 December 1939; Chinese Army spokesman asserted that Japan had suffered 100,000 casualties in December on all fronts. (NYT, 29 December 1939).

03 February 1940; The Chinese undertook mine-sweeping activities in the Yangtze River last year destroying 1,021 mines. Last month they destroyed an additional 37 mines. (NYT, 3 February 1940).

3 February 1940; Nanning/China. Constant field artillery and machine gun fire and bombing including two surprise thrusts by Japan, were said to have demoralized at least 140,000 of the 400,000 Chinese soldiers amassed to defend attacks on Nanning. (NYT, 03 February 1940).

3 February 1940; Six church leaders call for embargo on Japan, saying: "With our aid over 2,000,000 lives have been lost in the conflict. Between 5,000,000 and 10,000,000 other lives have been lost as a result of the war and over 60,000,000 people have been rendered homeless and destitute." (NYT, 3 February 1940).

### Summary

While looking for reasons as to how arctic air could move southwards with little resistance immediately after the war had started in Europe, the fighting in the Far East in the autumn and winter of 1939/40 should not be ignored. It is probable that, impacts of the war in China may have contributed, even though to a small extent by way of 'cloud seeding' only, to the severe war winter of 1939/40 experienced in Europe as well as to those two war winters that followed. The theory of climatic changes due to the impact of wars at sea seems irrelevant with regard to Japan's war with China from 1938-1945. The Sino-Japanese struggle was a land based war, with nothing in comparison to the naval warfare in Northern European waters in autumn 1939.