

# Exploration of International Propaganda and Taiwan-Korea Coordination of the Taiwan Volunteer Corps during the War of Resistance

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**Abstract:** The Taiwan Volunteer Corps was a regular revolutionary armed force dedicated to China's War of Resistance against Japan and committed to Taiwan's recovery and return to the motherland. During the Jinhua period of the War of Resistance, the Taiwan Volunteer Corps carried out anti-Japanese propaganda work through forms such as mutual publication in journals, joint lectures, and literary mobilization. Collaborating with anti-fascist forces such as the Korean Volunteer Corps, they jointly promoted cross-national joint propaganda and struggles against the enemy, expanding the international communication boundaries of the Taiwan anti-Japanese issue. This made outstanding contributions to the victory of China's War of Resistance against Japan and the consolidation of the Eastern anti-fascist front.

**Keywords:** Taiwan Volunteer Corps, International Propaganda, Korean Volunteer Corps.

## 1. Introduction

During the War of Resistance, the Taiwan Volunteer Corps was officially established in Jinhua, Zhejiang on February 22, 1939, under the Political Department of the Military Affairs Committee of the National Government, with Li Youbang serving as the Major General team leader, while the Taiwan Youth Corps was simultaneously attached. It was the only regular-armed anti-Japanese force composed of Taiwan compatriots during the War of Resistance<sup>[1]</sup>. The corps was active in the southeast battlefield of Zhejiang, Fujian, Anhui, and Jiangxi as well as the rear area of Chongqing, undertaking multiple tasks including enemy-oriented politics, medical rescue, production for the nation, and anti-Japanese propaganda.

Currently, academic research on the Taiwan Volunteer Corps has accumulated certain achievements, mostly focusing on the overall activities of the War of Resistance and the verification of regional history in Fujian and Zhejiang, while the specialized discussion of its propaganda work is particularly weak. In terms of overall research, Chen Zhengping's "Li Youbang and Taiwan Compatriots' Anti-Japanese Resistance" is the first systematic monograph, completely restoring the development trajectory of the Volunteer Corps<sup>[2]</sup>. Lou Zifang categorized its activities into seven aspects, establishing the basic research framework<sup>[1]</sup>. Chen Zhiping and Chen Boyuan utilized newly published archives to supplement previously neglected content such as intelligence infiltration and post-war reception<sup>[3]</sup>. Li Zhiming, centered on Zhang Yizhi, clarified the core role of the Chinese Communist Party in the creation of the Volunteer Corps<sup>[4]</sup>. In terms of Fujian-Zhejiang regional research, the academic community focused on verifying the activity trajectories and historical remains in Jinhua, Longyan, and other places<sup>[5]</sup>. Among them, Chen Minnan's analysis of the communication characteristics of the monthly "Taiwan Vanguard" is one of the few achievements involving propaganda work<sup>[6]</sup>.

Overall, existing research mostly focuses on military

affairs, medical care, and organizational construction, with propaganda work only mentioned incidentally. It fails to systematically sort out its propaganda system and operating mechanism, nor does it explore the intrinsic connection with the construction of national identity among Taiwan compatriots and the support of international anti-fascist support. The international significance of propaganda work is also rarely discussed. In view of this, this paper takes the propaganda work of the Taiwan Volunteer Corps as the core of exploration, examines its practice in national mobilization and the international public opinion arena, and reveals its unique historical value and international significance.

## 2. Jinhua as the Starting Point for External Propaganda

### (1) Transformation of Urban Functions

The change in Jinhua's role during the War of Resistance period is first reflected in the reorganization of urban functions. 1937, it quickly became the political, military, and cultural center of the Southeast War of Resistance, with more than 60 progressive newspapers and magazines such as "Zhejiang Tide" and "Southeast Front" published there<sup>[6]</sup>. In particular, the Jiufangxiang area formed a wartime cultural cluster integrating editing, printing, and distribution. These conditions enabled Jinhua to spread local anti-Japanese voices outward and expand its influence. After the Taiwan Volunteer Corps was established in the Jinhua area, it did not limit propaganda work to internal education within the corps, but instead used existing resources to face a broader masses. This strategic choice was highly consistent with Jinhua's urban conditions.

### (2) The Status of Propaganda Work

After the Taiwan Volunteer Corps and Taiwan Youth Corps were established in Jinhua in 1939, their political direction was quickly defined as "Defending the Motherland and Recovering Taiwan." During the preparation process, the Zhejiang Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party advocated first launching social propaganda supporting the War of Resistance, then promoting organizational

development, demonstrating the important position of propaganda in the Volunteer Corps' work<sup>[4]</sup>. The Volunteer Corps regarded it as an important component of overall War of Resistance practice, carrying it out in parallel with tasks such as enemy work, medical services, and production for the nation. In Zhang Bilai's memoir "The Taiwan Volunteer Corps in Zhejiang," propaganda is listed as one of the core tasks of the corps, emphasizing that the Taiwan Volunteer Corps carried out Taiwan revolution and national War of Resistance propaganda through various occasions to expand the corps' social influence<sup>[7]</sup>. At the same time, "Taiwan Vanguard" as the official publication of the Volunteer Corps continued to be published, forming a relatively stable channel for ideological mobilization and public opinion dissemination. Its content was both aimed at unifying understanding within the corps and explaining the political propositions of "Anti-Japanese Salvation" and "Motherland Reunification" to the public.

If we categorize the propaganda targets of this period in detail, we will find that the Volunteer Corps was not facing a single group. The Volunteer Corps emphasized "shared hatred across the two sides of the strait and joint resistance against foreign aggression" to mainland military and civilians, awakened "national identity and return to the motherland" among Taiwan compatriots in China, explained "the consistency between anti-colonialism and anti-fascism" to international figures, and adopted differentiated strategies by distinguishing "warlords and the people" toward Japanese prisoners and puppet troops. The organization was able to adjust propaganda content for different targets, with flexible and targeted propaganda methods<sup>[8]</sup>.

### (3) Theoretical Textual Support

Li Youbang's writings during his time in Zhejiang laid the theoretical foundation for the Volunteer Corps' propaganda. Li Youbang successively wrote and published three works in Jinhua and Lishui: "Japan's Colonial Policy in Taiwan," "Introduction to the Work of Disintegrating Enemy and Puppet Troops," and "The Taiwanese Revolutionary Movement," constructing the core ideological system of "To save Taiwan, one must first save the motherland." This system, based on the specific historical facts of Japanese colonial rule, also integrated Taiwan's liberation into the overall framework of China's War of Resistance and the world anti-fascist war, resolving the issues of legitimacy and justification for propaganda. These textual materials reveal a key fact: the Volunteer Corps' propaganda was neither temporary mobilization nor pure slogan dissemination. The organization formed a relatively stable system in Jinhua, which was the prerequisite for its subsequent advancement toward international cooperation.

## 3. Going International

The headquarters of the Taiwan Volunteer Corps mainly assumed external liaison functions in wartime propaganda. From the editing and publishing of the corps journal "Taiwan Vanguard" and inscriptions from people from all walks of life to the reprinting and interaction with other newspapers, the activities of the Volunteer Corps were seen by more people, also reflecting the headquarters' emphasis on issues and social communication<sup>[8]</sup>. The Taiwan Youth Corps coordinated with it, going deep into urban and rural areas through speeches, singing, and one-act plays, and conducting touring propaganda in Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi and other places, bringing the demands of War of Resistance salvation and Taiwan recovery to gathering occasions.

In addition to current events and revolutionary history, the Youth Corps curriculum also included Japanese slogans and anti-war songs. In propaganda activities, Youth Corps members conversed with Japanese prisoners in Japanese and promoted attitude changes, showing that the Volunteer Corps' propaganda had achieved cross-linguistic enemy communication<sup>[9]</sup>. Additionally, the Taiwan Youth Corps maintained correspondence with the Korean March First Youth Corps. In the "Letter from the Korean March First Youth Corps to the Taiwan Youth Corps," the Korean March First Youth Corps clearly proposed the cooperation request: "Recently we reported our work and studies to you... I hope you can also tell us about your work situation."<sup>[10]</sup> The Taiwan Volunteer Corps also maintained contact with the Korean Volunteer Corps and carried out joint propaganda, gradually expanding intra-team coordination into cross-organizational cooperation, and the propaganda scope also gradually expanded from local cooperation to broader regional coordination.

While continuously expanding the scope of propaganda, the Taiwan Volunteer Corps focused on adjusting narrative strategies to bring the Taiwan anti-Japanese issue into the international perspective. During the War of Resistance, Yimo's article "The Japanese Bandits' Exploitation of the Taiwanese People," starting from colonial policies and ruling methods, provided a more systematic historical and political basis for the Volunteer Corps' external explanations<sup>[11]</sup>. Tea parties attended by international journalists and people from various countries were also held in Guilin and other places. Li Doushan clearly stated in a joint speech: "Defeating Japanese imperialists is the common responsibility of China, Korea, and all oppressed peoples of the East." This indicates that the Taiwan Volunteer Corps' propaganda work had broken out of a single regional struggle framework, transforming Taiwan compatriots' anti-Japanese struggle into an organic component of the world anti-fascist and anti-colonial struggle, striving for understanding and recognition from the international community<sup>[12]</sup>. This kind of cross-organizational, internationally-oriented communication made the War of Resistance experiences of Taiwan compatriots in the middle and late stages of the War of Resistance no longer remain only at the local narrative level of the southeast corner, but could be understood as integrated into the overall context of China's War of Resistance and the world anti-fascist war.

## 4. The Communication Effectiveness and Historical Boundaries of International Cooperation

### (1) Taiwan-Korea Coordinated Propaganda

Taiwan-Korea coordination has received relatively little attention in research on the Taiwan Volunteer Corps, but it deserves attention from the perspective of communication mechanisms. The coordinated linkage between the two Volunteer Corps of Taiwan and Korea began from the preparation stage of the Taiwan Volunteer Corps. In April 1939, the Taiwan Volunteer Corps Preparatory Committee specially sent a letter to the Korean Volunteer Corps Guidance Committee, stating that the preparation of the corps had always been advanced under the "guidance and assistance" of their committee, and entrusted them to submit the organizational plan to the Political Department of the National Government on their behalf. From the organizational preparation stage, the two parties had already formed a stable

cooperative relationship<sup>[13]</sup>. Through talks, mutual publication in journals, joint activities, and stationed liaison methods, the two parties formed a relatively stable information exchange relationship. "Taiwan Vanguard" repeatedly introduced the Korean Volunteer Corps' anti-Japanese enemy propaganda program and front-line work dynamics. "Korean Volunteer Corps Newsletter" also reprinted relevant correspondence content of the Taiwan Volunteer Corps, and specially opened an "Allied Forces Dynamics" column to synchronously introduce the Taiwan Volunteer Corps' anti-Japanese deeds, medical services, and propaganda activities.<sup>[8,14]</sup> Li Da particularly explained: "Since the Korean Volunteer Corps participated in China's War of Resistance, they have been duty-bound regarding the arduous task of enemy propaganda... They voluntarily took on this active work," demonstrating the Korean Volunteer Corps' positive willingness to cooperate in propaganda with China<sup>[15,16]</sup>. The publication of "Korean Volunteer Corps Newsletter" was "distributed throughout all domestic battle zones and exported to Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and the Americas."<sup>[17]</sup> The Taiwan Volunteer Corps utilized the Korean Volunteer Corps' existing overseas communication network, allowing propaganda content to reach a broader overseas Chinese community and international audience. Under this communication framework, the Taiwan Volunteer Corps could more easily integrate the Taiwan issue into the overall narrative of joint anti-Japanese resistance for Eastern oppressed peoples, while the Korean side could also continuously pay attention to the anti-Japanese practices of Taiwan compatriots<sup>[18]</sup>. The mutual reprinting and introduction in publications or reports further expanded the attention scope from the East China interior outward. The international press, foreign figures sympathetic to China's War of Resistance, and readers concerned about anti-war issues could also more easily access the same batch of public materials and activity scenes<sup>[19]</sup>. It can be seen that Taiwan-Korea coordination was not only a work arrangement serving the War of Resistance front and domestic mobilization, but also an important path for gaining international public opinion and allowing people of different backgrounds to understand the significance of the War of Resistance.

#### (2) The Proposal and Suspension of the International Volunteer Corps Initiative

What is noteworthy in Taiwan-Korea cooperation is the joint idea of constructing an "International Volunteer Corps" proposed by both parties<sup>[15]</sup>. This idea was subject to multiple constraints of wartime organizational systems, fund allocation, and command authority, and ultimately was not realized. Moreover, cross-ethnic union, while theoretically reasonable, faced relatively high thresholds in practice. However, this does not mean that the initiative only had empty significance. It indicates that the Taiwan Volunteer Corps did not stop at the local propaganda achievements in Jinhua and other places, but attempted to amplify the communication effect of anti-fascism and joint resistance through organizational-level innovation. From regional daily propaganda to broader joint ideas, this progression reflected the Volunteer Corps' clear understanding and planning of the external political environment during wartime.

#### (3) Effectiveness and Response

The propaganda work of the Taiwan Volunteer Corps during the Jinhua period combined speeches, literary and artistic propaganda, and medical services, making War of Resistance mobilization more easily enter the daily life of urban and rural areas<sup>[20]</sup>. Through continuous participation in

various activities, Taiwan compatriots' recognition of the organization and willingness to participate in the joint War of Resistance also gradually deepened in specific practice. In terms of external communication, the Volunteer Corps utilized channels such as newspaper reprinting, visiting figures, and overseas Chinese community activities to make the deeds of Taiwan compatriots participating in China's War of Resistance known to more people.

The emergence of cooperative subjects such as the Korean Volunteer Corps made it easier for the outside world to understand the legitimacy of Taiwan's anti-Japanese resistance. Taiwan-Korea coordination also extended the Taiwan issue from a local issue to an international level through mutual reporting and joint activities, allowing Taiwan's anti-Japanese struggle to be integrated into the common narrative of Eastern oppressed peoples' anti-colonial and anti-fascist struggle, and be better seen by the world anti-fascist camp. This cross-national joint propaganda also had limitations that were difficult to break through. After Jinhua fell in 1942, the Volunteer Corps' propaganda positions were forced to relocate, and propaganda work suffered serious impact.

On the other hand, in the wartime international political structure, the Taiwan issue always held a subordinate position. Mainstream British and American media only had a few sporadic reports on the Taiwan Volunteer Corps, with far less attention than the Korean Volunteer Corps. The breadth and depth of its international communication were always constrained by wartime China's international status and the reality of Taiwan's colonization.

Despite these limitations imposed by the era, Taiwan-Korea coordinated propaganda still has indelible international significance. It allowed the world to truly see Taiwan compatriots' anti-Japanese commitment, and more importantly, constructed a spiritual bond of joint anti-fascism among Eastern oppressed peoples, leaving precious testimony for the Eastern front of the world anti-fascist war, showing compatriots on both sides of the strait sharing common hatred and connecting with international anti-aggression forces.

## 5. Conclusion

Since Taiwan fell under Japanese colonial rule, the Taiwanese people have unremittingly struggled to shake off colonial domination and pursue national liberation and freedom. After the full-scale outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan, patriotic Taiwanese led by Li Youbang actively coordinated with various forces and, with the assistance of the Korean Army of Volunteers and the support of the Nationalist government, formally established the Taiwan Army of Volunteers, making it an important internationalized anti-Japanese armed force active on the Chinese anti-fascist battlefield.

During the Chinese War of Resistance, the Taiwan Army of Volunteers undertook multiple tasks including enemy propaganda, medical aid, and production for the nation. More importantly, through coordinated actions with the Korean Army of Volunteers and other anti-fascist forces, they expanded the Taiwanese anti-Japanese cause from the southeast region of China to the international stage, making an undeniable impact in the Eastern front of the world anti-fascist war. The Taiwan Army of Volunteers' struggle was not only a concrete manifestation of China's Nationalist Front Against Japan, but also a vivid practice of joint resistance among the oppressed nations of the East.

The Taiwan Army of Volunteers' participation in the War of Resistance stands as a historical testament to the shared resistance of compatriots across the Taiwan Strait. It contributed not only to China's victory in the War of Resistance, but also to the triumph of the world anti-fascist war. Furthermore, it held profound significance for awakening the national identity of Taiwanese compatriots and promoting unity between the two sides of the Strait. The user seems satisfied with the conclusion I wrote. Let me wait for further instructions.

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