

Communications to the Editor

Craig Storti has sent a response to L. Eve Armentrout Ma's review of his book, *Incident at Bitter Creek: The Story of the Rock Springs Chinese Massacre*, published in *JAS* 50.4 (November 1991):922–23.

Your reviewer, L. Eve Armentrout Ma, charges in her review that the source of my information about relations between the Chinese and non-Chinese comes from “testimony solicited by Congress after the massacre and [from] a book published in 1886.” She goes on to imply that my sources fail to account for the fact that the Chinese and non-Chinese worked in relative peace for the ten years preceding the massacre. I do rely heavily on the Congressional testimony and on a book published in 1886, but I would add that there is an entire chapter on the relations between the Chinese and the non-Chinese, with numerous footnotes from sources from the 1870s and early 1880s. This chapter details these relations at length and I point out that during this period there “was not even much hostility” toward the Chinese (p. 95). As for the book published in 1886, I do quote from it frequently, but I would like to add that it is an officially commissioned Union Pacific history of the massacre, one that goes out of its way to paint the actions of the railway and the Chinese in as favorable a light as possible.

In that same paragraph, Ma declares that I use “these posterior sources to ‘prove’ [that] Chinese miners provoked the massacre.” While I certainly accuse the Chinese of provocative conduct from time to time, as I believe the record shows, I make it quite clear in the book that the blame for the massacre lies elsewhere, chiefly with the Union Pacific and its officials in Wyoming. The Chinese, as I say in several places in the book, were caught in the middle.

Ma then says that I repeat the “generally disproved” charge that many Chinese came to America as enslaved “coolies.” I do mention that many Chinese came as “coolies,” but I also state that this was not the preferred way to come (p. 5), and on many occasions I refer to the other methods by which the Chinese came to America. To my knowledge, no one disputes the fact that *some* Chinese came as “coolies,” and I regard Ma’s statement as misleading at best.

Ma also charges that while the Rock Springs massacre was an important event in the history of the Knights of Labor, the Wabash strike and the Haymarket bombing were more important but were “deemphasize[d]” by me. I devote a whole page to the Wabash strike (pp. 142–43) and specifically refer to it as “an even greater setback” for the union than the Rock Springs massacre. Later in the book (p. 173), I mention that the Southwest strike and the Haymarket bombing were the *coups de grace* for the union. If I don’t go on about these other incidents, it is not because I don’t consider them important—I do, and moreover I say that I do in the text—but because they are not my subject. Under these circumstances, to say that I deemphasize these incidents is disingenuous at best.

Ma then asserts that “the Knights of Labor were not really the most important chapter in the history of American labor. One need only mention the Workingman’s Party of the 1870s [and] the American Federation of Labor (founded in the 1880s).” To begin with, I don’t make this claim, but I do state that the Knights were the most powerful and important union of their time, which the record clearly supports. As for the two unions to which Ma refers, The Workingman’s Party was, in fact,

called The Workingman's Party of California, and while it was indeed very powerful along the West Coast, it was not a player nationally, and the AFL, as Ma herself points out, was just in its infancy.

Finally, in her summation, Ma characterizes as flawed my supposed thesis "that the massacre was a prime determinant of the 'status of the workingman in the industrial era.'" Such a thesis would indeed be flawed, but it is not mine. The entire passage Ma quotes from here reads, "but in the end the killing in Rock Springs, the Exclusion Act, and the whole tumultuous history of the Chinese in America had little to do with race prejudice or immigration policy. The issue, rather, was the status of the American workingman in the industrial era" (p. xi–xii). This last charge is a serious misrepresentation of what I wrote and a damning indictment of my work. If it were true, Ma would indeed have grounds for not recommending my book. But it is not true and, as I have tried to show, it is of a piece with several other subtle misrepresentations made in this review, the cumulative effect of which is to undermine my credibility.

As a writer, I don't expect reviewers will always agree with me or even like my books, but I do expect they will describe what I have written accurately and fairly. And then let the battle be joined. But when reviewers misrepresent the text, the battle is bogus and the author is inevitably the loser.

CRAIG STORTI
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L. Eve Armentrout Ma replies:

Craig Storti's reply to my review disagrees with my characterization of his sources, primarily on the basis that "there was not even much hostility" (p. 95) felt by whites towards Chinese in Rock Springs in the 1870s and early 1880s, and on the basis of his having a chapter on broader white-Chinese relations. With respect to the "hostility" issue, on the page where he makes that statement, Storti also explains that there was at that time an anti-Chinese organization flourishing in Rock Springs' "Whitemen's Town," and that "the Chinese was [sic] in many ways not quite a real person in the white man's mind, not altogether human" (p. 95).

As to the chapter on broader white-Chinese relations, a few quotes will give the flavor. In that chapter, Storti tells us how hard it was for white laborers to put up with the Chinese who had "rather more different . . . looks and . . . inscrutable ways" (p. 23); that the Chinese were the "willing accomplice [sic]" (p. 23) of the "wealthy merchant princes" (p. 22) in San Francisco (and New York) who were oppressing the white laborers; how when a white mob attacked Los Angeles Chinatown in 1876, murdering more than a dozen Chinese and burning down Chinatown, the Chinese had really started the fight and besides, at first the Chinese had "answered [the mob's gunfire] round for round" (p. 26); and that when there was a drought, poor pickings in the gold fields, and general economic depression in California in the mid-1870s, "with poor timing" (p. 28) Chinese continued to come to California and "continued to venture, with increasing success, beyond their traditional occupations as miners, house servants, and launderers" (p. 28). Regrettably, Storti tells us, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was the eventual, logical result of this misbehavior on the part of Chinese, "was deeply flawed . . . riddled with loopholes. To begin with, the new law did not prevent the immigration of Chinese coming from countries other than China" (p. 30).

All this points up my greatest difficulty with Storti's book, which is what I see as an anti-Chinese bias on his part, a bias that seriously distorts his work. I find it incredible that a present-day author would state, "in the end the killing in Rock Springs, the Exclusion Act, and the whole tumultuous history of the Chinese in America had little to do with race prejudice or immigration policy" (pp. xi-xii). I find it even more incredible that Storti uses this statement here to defend his objectivity. Where has he been? Were no adequate sources available to Storti to give him a more balanced perspective on the general situation, his difficulty would still be regrettable, but at least more understandable. In fact, however, the past several decades have produced much scholarship on the history of the Chinese of America using Chinese as well as non-Chinese sources, and there are also plenty of good, recent books on the anti-Chinese movement. Storti's bibliography shows that he ignored most of these books; in short, he simply didn't do his job. I would suggest that if he had, he would not have considered Chinese Exclusion and the expulsion of Chinese a rational, reasoned response on the part of labor to the "robber barons" and the Chinese, their alleged flunkys.

I find some problem also with Storti's rendering of my interpretation of his thesis. In his introduction, he states that the Rock Springs massacre (his topic) was essentially "one of the more tragic incidents in the larger struggle between labor and monopoly capitalism for control of the American workplace" (p. xi). He further tells us that "The issue . . . was the status of the American workingman in the industrial era" (p. xii). Isn't this a labor thesis? If so, my criticism stands as earlier—he does not put matters in perspective. His reply comes close to saying all there is to say on this topic. He explains, for example, that he devoted about one page total (one sentence more than five paragraphs, to be exact) to the two relevant, contemporaneous events he considers even more important in this respect than his book topic. (The two events in question are the Wabash strike and the Haymarket bombing.) As his reply here points out, he gives similar short shift to the major organized labor movements which preceded and followed the Knights of Labor/Chinese conflicts and the massacre at Bitter Creek. The virulently anti-Chinese Workingman's Party in particular, a movement potent enough to capture California for a time, influence most of the western states, and secure the passage of national legislation (most notably the first Chinese Exclusion Act) is not even mentioned in Storti's glossary. So much for Storti's labor movement focus.

Finally, no, I don't believe that recent scholarship agrees that a large proportion of Chinese came to the United States in the nineteenth century as "coolies." True, the coolie trade to much of Latin America is well documented, but the myth of large-scale coolie labor coming into the United States has been reliably dispelled. I am sorry, but even after reading Storti's reply to my review, I cannot recommend his book.

L. EVE ARMENTROUT MA

Donald A. Jordon has sent the following response to Richard Chu's review of his book, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931-1932*, published in *JAS* 51.2 (May 1992):383-84.

I thank Richard Chu for drawing attention to the interpretations in my book on the origins of the great Sino-Japanese conflict. His review may shed little light but it does reveal how much heat can be generated whenever comfortable assumptions are challenged. I sympathize with the generation of Chinese who have found comfort

in seeing that terrible war as simply between the forces of good and evil. The suggestion that China, as well as Japan, needs to reexamine its contributions to the worsening of relations before the war has brought pain, and the emotional response is obvious in the review. I am familiar with Richard Chu's patriotic views in the *Journal of Studies of Japanese Aggression Against China*, in which history is linked to contemporary East Asia Politics.

When Chu states that I was "looking at a single tree" of causation and missed the forest of blame that Japan deserves, I must question the care he took in his reading. Chu's opening statement that the book covers the "period from the Mukden Incident of September 18, 1931, to . . . January 28, 1932" is a glaring error. My most important contributions come in the chronicle of Sino-Japanese economic tensions not after, but before September 18—especially from July onward, when the anti-Japanese boycott began. This is the subject of the first third of the book plus the opening parts of the next four chapters. If anything, I have been anxious that I was complicating my study with too many causes. I do reject the old simplistic version that the Chinese were always the passive victims, but never the actors, in the worsening of Sino-Japanese relations in 1931 prior to the coup of the Kwantung Army. Both sides were actors and victims in the tragedy.

When Chu says that I have written off "anti-Japanese sentiments" as "merely xenophobic" and "not patriotic" he is, once again, looking for black and white where there was gray. Read carefully, my study does, indeed, state that "the spirit behind the boycott was not merely Chinese patriotism" before Mukden. The semantic use of the words "not merely" does not negate Chinese "patriotism" as Chu implies in the review, but directs attention to additional "trees" of causation in "the forest"—including economic motives. My evidence from Japanese, Western, and Chinese sources highlights a phase in East Asian relations before Mukden that has been long ignored, when desperate Chinese industrialists, businessmen, and Kuomintang modernizers struggled at Shanghai to find some way to gain independence from Japanese capital. One Chinese perception was that there was no stopping the superefficient zaibatsu after 1930–31 from taking over the Chinese economy. That Chinese frustration parallels what some in the U.S. feel today.

In mid-1931, rather than openly abrogating commercial treaties with Japan, the Chinese capitalists and KMT cadre in Shanghai decided to promote a "spontaneous" anti-Japanese boycott (the ninth) that they hoped would provide domestic producers a window of opportunity for import replacement. Nowhere do I criticize the Chinese for wanting to break out of the dependency pattern under Japan, or for resisting dependency vassalage under Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere," as Chu implies. All countries are anxious to avoid that relationship, especially today. I do argue that as an economic and then political tactic, China's great anti-Japanese boycott of 1931 turned out to be counterproductive, as did similar U.S. economic sanctions against Japan in 1940–41. In retrospect, the boycott did not modify what I state as the "obstreperous insensitivity of Japanese capitalists toward Chinese economic plans." Rather than being stymied by the boycott, many Japanese firms expanded from marketing in China to a much broader range of markets elsewhere in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In addition, the Japanese business communities, first in Manchuria before Mukden, and then elsewhere in China after September 1931, turned defensively to the Japanese military for help in regaining their markets in China. The Japanese army expansionists were able to capitalize on the anti-Japanese boycott as a pretext to implement the aggressive plans they already had for conquest. Thus, the anti-Japanese boycott only helped to trigger what were the long-standing myriad of tensions between the two neighbors.

Chu strains logic when he claims that I have both dismissed the anti-Japanese movement as only being a “Chinese capitalist conspiracy,” and then a movement which could also be “merely xenophobic” as well. That adds up to at least two trees of causation. Concerning anyone who might dare to look critically at the anti-Japanism in China, even within the KMT, Chiang Kai-shek’s Cantonese opposition on the Left accused Nanking, before Mukden, of bungling Sino-Japanese chances through blatant use of anti-Japanism (the Japan bashing of that time). Please notice my treatment of Eugene Chen’s mission from Canton to Japan in July and August 1931 to disavow Nanking’s tough line. As can be seen in my use of his own telegram, in July 1931 Chiang Kai-shek cautioned publicly against an anti-Japanese movement which might cause Japanese retaliation and disrupt Nanking’s efforts at internal consolidation and economic reconstruction. Discounting Chiang’s anxiety, his C.C. faction at Shanghai in July pushed both to use the boycott to promote domestic industries and to win needed mass support.

Obviously, after Japanese aggressors took Manchuria in September, the Chinese who then joined the existing boycott had naturally become outraged by the Japanese army’s solution to the exploitation of the Chinese economy. As my study shows, Chiang’s enemies within and outside the KMT, took over the anti-Japanese movement after Mukden, turning it against his regime at Nanking. The inner motives within the boycott had been anything but “merely xenophobic.” The Communists soon realized how powerful anti-Japanism had become as a tool in domestic politics and embraced it as a key to their future success within China. Even to the present day, the rivalry continues as to whether the Communists or the Kuomintang were more anti-Japanese after 1931.

Chu also claims that I found that “Chinese diplomats bribed Washington and London” into recognition of Japanese aggression in Manchuria and then Shanghai in 1932. I do state, less emotionally, that because Nanking was too bankrupt to subsidize Chinese industries to replace Japanese imports, it “encouraged imports from British and American suppliers to fill China’s unmet demands . . . [which was] infuriating to Japanese . . . already entrenched in China.” It was in Nanking’s best interests to attract Western countries into trade relationships during the world depression. Thereby, China might gain economic allies against Japanese dominion. The Japanese today need to reflect on what came of their aggressive trading approach in China after the first Sino-Japanese War, which by 1931 brought defensive responses not only from China but from Western trade partners.

Lessons of history can upset comfortable rationales, but, no pain, no gain. I ask readers to decide for themselves if this revisionist work is too pro-Japanese. I await similar discomfort from Japanese over my description of the close cooperation, as early as 1931, in China between Japanese civilian circles and the more overtly aggressive Japanese army.

DONALD A. JORDAN
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Richard Chu replies:

I appreciate Donald Jordon’s thoughtful response to my review and especially his comment, “I do argue that as an economic and then political tactic, China’s great anti-Japanese boycott of 1931 turned out to be counterproductive . . . The

Japanese army expansionists were able to capitalize [on the situation]. Thus, the anti-Japanese boycott only helped to trigger . . . tensions between the two neighbors." That constitutes a reasonably balanced judgment. Regrettably, the book itself did not leave the same impression on this reviewer.

On the other hand, Jordon also states earlier, "Nowhere do I criticize the Chinese for wanting to break out of the dependency pattern under Japan . . . as Chu implies." My review does not say that, rather I quoted from Jordon's introduction and then questioned if Jordon's judgment does not, in fact, support the idea that China was wrong to challenge Japan over the Japanese version of "friendly Sino-Japanese interdependence." When I wrote my review, I suspected that Jordon's premise indicated he had not looked into the true meaning of the Japanese version of "friendly Sino-Japanese interdependence"; now, after reading Jordon's response, I am confirmed in my judgment.

The central issue of our disagreement, as I see it, is over the theme of Jordon's book encapsulated in his subtitle, *The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931–1932*. Jordon argues the Nationalists shifted their anti-imperialist propaganda from Britain in 1927 to Japan in 1928, and this became part of the new "Revolutionary Diplomacy," which focused on excluding Japanese interests from the Chinese marketplace. From this, I concluded that Jordon's principal thesis was that it was a response to Chinese "Revolutionary Diplomacy" that Japan changed its China policy to one progressively more committed to military response, at Mukden on September 18, 1931, and afterward.

While I would agree that "Revolutionary Diplomacy" was a significant factor, nevertheless it alone cannot explain why Japan wanted to expand into China in the first place. Furthermore, Japan's military aggression against China from the Mukden Incident through the Marco Polo Bridge Incident was a process of repeated aggression deriving from forces shaping the Japanese political world—including internal and external, historical and contemporary, economic and social factors, all of which contributed to the growing domination of militarists within the Japanese government. "Revolutionary Diplomacy" from China was only one of the factors shaping Japanese policy. My own views on the subject are contained in the article, "A Comprehensive Analysis of the Development of Japanese Militarism in Modern Times," *KangRi zhanzheng yanjiu* [Studies on the Anti-Japanese War] (1992, 1:13–25), published by the Institute of Modern History, Beijing.

In response to my description of his analysis as concentrating on one tree and missing the forest, Jordon's reply states that his development of a "Chinese capitalist conspiracy" and "xenophobic" mass activities already add up to "at least two trees of causation." I, however, continue to view these two as differing expressions of the same policy. Jordon writes, "Thus, [as] the anti-Japanese boycott had come to be viewed by the Japanese as part of the continuing *xenophobic* (my emphasis) attitude . . . there was some logic to the rationale" (p. 190). Here there is no implication of "not merely Chinese patriotism," as Jordon states in his reply. To the contrary, he agrees with the term "xenophobic." Jordon also wrote, "During October the nature of the anti-Japanese boycott and related activity shifted away from its economic origins. . . . The recurrent *xenophobic* (my emphasis) outbursts in China . . ." (p. 204). Again, Jordon's own words should be crystal clear to any reader and do not fall "in the grey areas" he claims in his response.

Jordon calls the opening statement of my review "a glaring error," arguing that I ignored his treatment of the anti-Japanese boycott by focusing on the Mukden Incident in my review. Given that the book is about the *failure* of "Revolutionary Diplomacy," it would follow that this boycott is only a background factor, while

it is the Mukden Incident itself that illustrates the initial failure of the Nationalist policy. In other words, the boycott is part of the policy, not part of the failure.

Furthermore, I did not ignore Jordan's most important contributions, as he asserts in his reply. It was those important contributions, including his "chronicles of Sino-Japanese economic tensions," to which I referred when I wrote, "I found the factual part of his book meticulously done." Some readers also may wonder what Jordan means when he writes, "I am familiar with Richard Chu's patriotic views in the *Journal of Studies of Japanese Aggression Against China*, in which history is linked to contemporary East Asia politics." He could mean that I have published in a patriotically colored history journal; therefore my views are nothing more than patriotic. In the eight issues of that journal published so far, I have contributed a single article in February 1991, and Jordan himself contributed an article in August 1991. So, Jordan cannot be referring to the journal, but rather to the content of my article itself.

My article there was entitled "Historical Origins of Japanese Aggression against China" (volume V, pp. 5–11) and in it I pointed out that the Wako tradition, the continental ambitions of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, the expansionist theorists from the late Tokugawa period, all provide evidence of Japan's long-standing interest in the continent. Further, I showed how Yoshida Shoin, the synthesizer of Tokugawa expansionist theories, passed his ideas onto a group of bright and ambitious young samurai, including leaders of the Restoration such as Ito Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo. Thus, given this earlier expansionist tradition, Japan's expansionist policies toward the Asian continent are not surprising. Explanations based on such obvious historical continuities should not be brushed off as merely "patriotic views."

Finally, I wish Jordan had not used such lofty expressions as "I sympathize with the generation of Chinese who have found comfort in seeing that terrible war as simply between the forces of good and evil." There is a patronizing tone in this comment that is unwarranted.

RICHARD CHU
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