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# DAILY ENTERPRISE



## (U) HISTORY TODAY - February 23, 2016

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### (U) A look back at WW II: ULTRA decrypts and 'Southwest Activities'



(U) The Japanese invaded China in July 1936, and, despite some initial setbacks, forced the Republic of China (ROC) government to retreat to Chungking, in China's far west. Chungking, pictured, though within range of Japanese bombers, was too far inland for Japanese land attacks. Japan contented itself with occupying coastal China and contiguous areas.

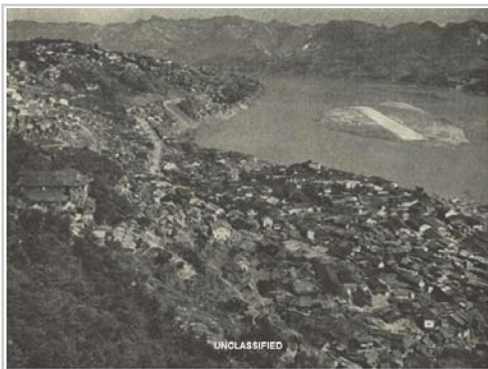
(U) The Japanese sought to establish espionage networks in territory still held by the ROC. Agents in ROC territory apparently forwarded reports by clandestine radio, which were then forwarded to Tokyo.

(U) When these reports were included in high-level Japanese diplomatic communications, the U.S. was able to decrypt them, and reported the material in ULTRA channels. (ULTRA was a codeword in World War II that indicated the information was produced by cryptanalysis of high-grade enemy systems.)

(U) Thus, the U.S. and UK knew of the existence of a Japanese diplomatic espionage network in China established in March 1942, including some reporting from Chungking, but they were unable to identify any of the personnel involved. Because the U.S. and UK did not exchange ULTRA reports with the ROC, they did not tip the Chinese government off to the existence of these enemy agents. The information passed in the espionage reports was not very critical; if it had been, the U.S. or UK would have found a way to pass a warning to the ROC government.

(U) The espionage network was known to the Japanese as "Southwest Activities," and the recipient of the reports was the Tonegi Agency, named after Consul Tonegi in Japanese-occupied Canton.

(U) The most productive agent in the Southwest Activities network was known only by the syllable "PA."



(U) Chungking, in China's far west (circa 1940s).

(U) PA was located in Chungking and claimed to have contact with many ROC government officials, as well as contacts in the British and Russian embassies. On a couple of occasions he claimed to have had interaction with Chiang Kai-shek, the president of the ROC. PA began reporting in January 1943. His reports came steadily until April 1945, when the Tonegi Agency ceased operations.

(U) Reading ULTRA translations of PA's reports, Allied analysts concluded that the information he was acquiring in Chungking was about what could be expected of an energetic reporter, and, in fact, they speculated that PA was a journalist.

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(U) Allied analysts also raised the possibility that a lot of PA's information was made up or exaggerated. As a wrap-up report on the Tonegi Agency put it, "In view of the gullibility of Japanese reporting officers, and their tendency to exaggerate the importance of their activities, it is entirely possible that the statements made by their agents are partially or wholly untrue, and that even statements made by Japanese reporting officers supposedly based on their personal knowledge are not wholly to be trusted."

(U) In any case, the information obtained by the spies was not critical to the war effort and their reporting apparently did little if any harm to the war against the Japanese in China.

(U) To discuss historical topics with interesting folks, visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [History Rocks](#) ("go history rocks").

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