CHAPTER 11

The Chinese Government’s Persuasion and Education of the Masses Prior to Reestablishing Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations

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Abstract

To promote normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations, the Chinese government—from a strategic perspective—played down the memories of war and hoped that historical problems would not influence reestablishment of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. It was, however, inevitable that this would encounter a certain degree of resistance from nationalistic sentiment. The Chinese government, which represents the overall interests of the people, could not fail to consider such nationalistic sentiment among the masses. To dispel and mitigate the conflicted, disgusted feelings of the masses, the Chinese government launched wide-scale persuasion and education and positive guidance work, based in a “theory of differentiation” toward Japan. The government cautioned the people against “substituting feelings for policies.” In the end, the masses accepted the reality of normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations.

Keywords

normalization of Sino-Japanese relations – Chinese government – mass feelings – persuasion and education

As everybody knows, popular diplomacy made a significant contribution to normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Past academic research has focused heavily on the positive role played by nationalistic sentiment in


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the process of normalizing Sino-Japanese relations, overlooking the influence of popular Chinese sentiments to a certain degree. In reality, painful memories from the war caused the Chinese people not to be able to emotionally understand or accept the Chinese government’s active implementation of friendly policies toward Japan. How to persuade and educate the masses became a great difficulty for the Chinese government. In this essay, I will make observations into the methods employed by the Chinese government to persuade and educate the masses, on the basis of relevant materials.

1 The Chinese Government’s Standpoint on War Memories: Play Them Down from a High Strategic Perspective, Not Allowing Historical Problems to Influence the Big Picture of Normalization of Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations

Following the founding of New China, the Chinese government placed great importance on Sino-Japanese relations, hoping they could be normalized quickly. However, as the Japanese government adopted long-term policies towing the American line and regarding China with hostility, the government’s attitude was: “New China’s policies toward Japan can be made only from a basic starting point of developing friendly relations between the people of China and the people of Japan (not between their governments). On this basis, we will isolate the U.S., indirectly influence the Japanese people, exert pressure on the Japanese government, and force Japan to change its relations with China, gradually realizing normalization of Sino-Japanese relations.” The Chinese government’s attitude stemmed from the concept of “trusting the people, relying on the people, and placing hope in the people.” Government officials believed that the vast majority of Japanese people were willing to be friendly with the Chinese people, and so established a policy of popular diplomacy toward Japan. This policy employed a method of “gradual accumulation and using the people to urge officials” to proactively promote normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. “Based on this policy, and as the Japanese Communist Party gave enthusiastic, precious support to the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese people during the War of Resistance Against Japan, the Chinese Communist Party—from its standpoint of proletarian internationalism—naturally extends unlimited empathy and resolute sup-