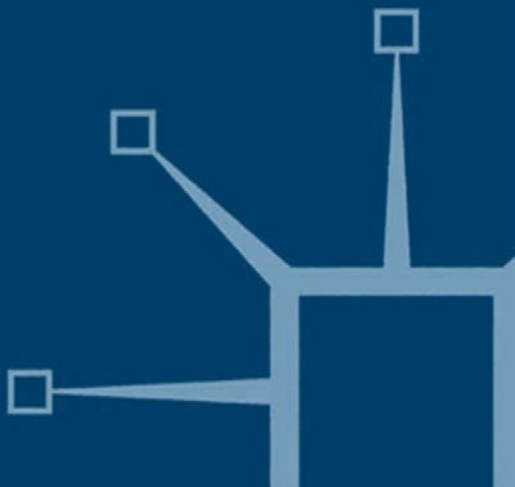


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American Radio in China

**International Encounters with
Technology and Communications, 1919–41**

Michael A. Krysko



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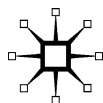
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and Communications, 1919–41

Michael A. Krysko

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My daughter Liliana was born in 1999 when this project was in its early stages. It will be a pleasure to celebrate her next birthday without "American Radio in China" looming in the background. I cannot imagine how I could have finished this project at all were it not for my wife and best friend Heather McCrea. Her support, encouragement, and friendship have been a constant. She read an earlier draft of every chapter in this book, most more than once. Heather's insights, observations, and constructive criticisms made each a new draft better than the one that came before it. More than anything, I suspect Heather and Liliana, the two most important people in my life, are just delighted that this project is finally done. So am I.

MICHAEL A. KRYSKO
MANHATTAN, KANSAS

A Note on Romanization

The text of this manuscript utilizes the pinyin system of Romanizing Chinese names and places. However, the primary sources used to research this study use the older and now less common Wade-Giles system. Names and places in the source citations leave the Romanization format adopted in the original source (generally, Wade-Giles). This practice leads to some inconsistencies in spelling between the text and the notes. If a name or place listed in a cited primary source also figures prominently in the text, I include the pinyin equivalent in brackets in the relevant endnote. In some instances, the pinyin spelling of Chinese names that appear in the main text might be unfamiliar to some readers (e.g., Shi Shaoji and Gu Weijun might be better known to some readers Alfred Sze and Wellington Koo, respectively). In those cases, I provide the alternative Romanization in brackets next to the pinyin spelling. Two significant exceptions to this practice are my use of the Wade-Giles Romanizations to identify Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek and the territory of Manchukuo (rather than using “Jiang Jieshi” and “Manzhouguo”). The popularity of those Wade-Giles Romanizations in current scholarship compelled me to eschew the use of the pinyin equivalents in those two instances. Finally, the city of Mukden, a significant focus for Chapter 2, is now known as Shenyang.

Introduction

“The Great Blessings That Radio Will Engender in This Old and Populous Land”: American Expectations and Radio in China

On January 23, 1923, Americans in Shanghai enthusiastically awaited the very first radio broadcast of entertainment programming in China. “Businessmen were of the unanimous opinion that the innovation would prove of unusual benefit, both from an educational and entertainment point of view,” the American-owned *China Press* reported, “and the promoters of the unique scheme have been deluged with congratulations.” E.G. Osborn, a British-born American, founded the radio station over the protests of the Chinese government. Located in Shanghai’s International Settlement, station XRO stood outside Chinese jurisdiction. Treaties dating back to the nineteenth century and an earlier era of Western imperialism had established the settlement as a foreign-controlled enclave. Osborn’s station became the first in a succession of foreign-operated stations that monopolized Shanghai’s airwaves until the first Chinese-owned station hit the airwaves in 1927. XRO’s music, news, and entertainment broadcasts, the *China Press* noted, were slated to begin at 8:00pm. The broadcast schedule included a violin solo by renowned violinist Jaraniev Kocian of Prague, a saxophone solo by George Hall, singing by the San Francisco-based Golden Gate Quartet, and dance music; news bulletins from the United States, Europe, and China would be interspersed with the entertainment throughout the night.¹

Roy Delay, the manager of Kellogg’s Switchboard and Supply Company’s Far Eastern division, had no doubt that XRO marked “a great step in the progress of communication in China.” “The Chinese

people will welcome broadcasting as it will prove not only a source of entertainment," Delay effused, "but a means of educating the Chinese youth in the latest means of communication contributed to the world by science."² A little less than two years later, Delay's enthusiasm for radio in China motivated him to start his own station, KRC. He struck a deal with the *China Press* to use a vacant space in their facilities for a studio in exchange for broadcasting their news alongside some musical programming. To serve as the program's announcer, he hired *China Press* reporter Irene Kuhn, who shared his enthusiasm for radio's future in China. "The possibilities of radio in China are beyond the wildest dreams of the most perfervid romanticist," she wrote in one of her articles. "In this great country where thousands of people are living in the hinterlands, so far removed from even the fringes of civilization that they are as yet unaware of the fact that China threw off her monarchical form of government in 1911," she posited, "the introduction of a small instrument which can bridge the gap with the human voice can change the entire fortune of China." On December 15, 1924, Kuhn did her part to spark that change over the new Delay station. "I had stepped before a 'mike,' and sent my voice into the air," she recollected, "the first woman ever to broadcast in the Orient and probably the first feminine announcer in the business." Her broadcasts were apparently a hit. "We got reports by the bale," she recalled. "Missionaries cut off from the outside world in their little stations in the interior, fans in North and South China, and Japan, wrote enthusiastically."³

Purdue professor of engineering and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) representative Clarence Robertson, who had been regularly traveling to China since 1902 delivering science lectures, was stunned by radio's quick rise in popularity when he arrived again in late 1923. "[D]aily programs of Western and Chinese selections are sent out," Robertson reported in *Radio Broadcast*, "and the same great enthusiasm and unanswerable demand for receiving equipment has developed in Shanghai that so many of you are familiar with in America." The YMCA must continue its efforts to offer radio training, literature, and equipment, Robertson concluded, "so that there may increasingly come to China the great blessings that radio will engender in this old and populous land."⁴

These American reactions to the beginning of broadcasting in China capture the optimism of the époque, when it seemed that radio offered unlimited potential to reshape and improve Chinese society. Radio fit nicely into a popular narrative that cast the United States as a beneficial modernizing power, facilitating the inevitable march of progress in



Figure 1.1 Clarence Robertson with former Chinese president Li Yuanhong and his grand children (*Radio Broadcast*, September 1923)

“old” China. Accordingly, radio could help diffuse American values to the Chinese people and facilitate the Westernization of China through spread of a beneficial American model of development. In such visions, the Chinese people often lacked an active role in guiding the transformation of their society. Instead, the power to affect change generally rested with the technology and the Americans who wielded it. In this view, the Chinese were little more than the lucky recipients of the improvements that radio and the Americans promised to bring.

This study explores how these beliefs in radio’s transformative powers impacted the expansion of American radio in China and wider East Asia during the 1920s and 1930s. The various radiotelegraphy and broadcasting initiatives explored in this account betray a large gap between the discourse of progress, civilization, and friendship that heralded American radio projects and the reality of ignorance, misunderstanding, and antagonism that dogged their implementation. The US effort to use radio as a means of expanding American economic and cultural power fell victim to the region’s broader political, economic, and diplomatic struggles. Civil war, rising Chinese nationalism, and Chinese state-building initiatives that sought to reclaim lost sovereignty, combined with accelerating Japanese expansion and imperialism throughout the



Figure 1.2 Clarence Robertson experimenting with a loop transmitting and receiving station on the streets of Shanghai (*Radio Broadcast*, September 1923)

era, wreaked havoc on American radio initiatives. Americans involved in radio struggled to adapt to the often-volatile challenges they confronted in China.

The chapters that follow explore how radio became intertwined with some of the major international complications and controversies that

littered the American road to the Pacific War of World War II. A variety of American radio initiatives were launched and floundered in the period from the Washington Conference of 1921–22 through Japan's war against China in the late 1930s. The hopes that surrounded the first Shanghai radio broadcast in 1923 could never be realized. Instead of peaceful cooperation, the conflicting goals of Chinese nationalism, Japanese militarism, and American expansion defined the 1920s and 1930s in such a way that the near-utopian expectations affixed to radio seem, in retrospect, hopelessly naïve. Ultimately, American radio projects helped inflame, rather than quench, the era's deep international divisions.

Yet throughout this period, most Americans never questioned the assumption that American radio was capable of promoting universal good through the expansion of particularly American interests. When radio struggled to transform "old" China, its promoters found it convenient to blame the ignorance, disingenuousness, or outright malfeasance of presumably misguided Chinese or Japanese actors rather than question their own assumptions. These Americans believed that radio possessed the overwhelming power to remake non-Western societies and spur American-style development. And yet when those expectations fell short, these same Americans often had little trouble blaming the recalcitrance of only a few ill-informed or ill-intentioned Chinese and Japanese – the very same people radio presumably had been poised to influence and uplift with ease. I conceived of this study with such issues and contradictions in mind. In so doing, one of my central goals is to illuminate how fundamental misconceptions about the relationship between technology and society informed American strategies, policies, and actions for radio in China. Based on such misguided views, American efforts had little chance of achieving their objectives, and instead provoked bitter international disputes. Consequently, the stories that follow speak to a sort of comedy of *mis*-communication, in which American approaches to international radio proved vulnerable to enduring but misguided notions about the power and purpose of international media.

Americans and technology in world affairs

This account's dual emphasis on the belief in technology's power to improve and on the American attempt to remake the East Asian landscape places this story at the intersection of the history of technology and US foreign relations. The global power achieved by the

United States in the early twentieth century was closely intertwined with the technological development that accompanied expanding American economic and military strength. Americans often understood the story of their nation's rise to power through what historian David Nye calls "technological foundation stories." Several complementary narratives underscored the centrality of technology in how many Americans understood their history. These accounts portrayed Americans, equipped with their axes, mills, irrigation techniques, canals, and railroads, conquering the continent, and looking to a future in which new and yet to be invented technologies promised to propel the American people to even greater power and affluence.⁵

US expansion and imperialism brought Americans into contact and conflict with many non-Westerners, such as Native Americans, Mexicans, and Filipinos, and here too the story seemed to be one of technological triumphalism. In his seminal study of Western technology's influence on global relations since the Age of Exploration, Michael Adas argues that the contrast between Western technology and that of non-Western societies shaped European and American attitudes toward non-Western peoples. Those attitudes emerged from older European views that held the so-called heathen savages of the colonized world in low regard; the rapid advancement of scientific and technological knowledge that appeared to occur primarily in the Euro-American world subsequently bolstered the existing presumptions of a Western religious and racial superiority over all other peoples. Technology became the new guidepost by which distinctions were drawn between "the West" and the "non-West." In this view, non-Westerners were often presumed to lack an endogenous capacity for development. If these peoples were at all capable of technological development, societal progress, and modern civilization, their alleged "lethargy" toward technology mandated Western tutelage.⁶

Americans, descended as they were from the European tradition, embraced this ideology of dominance. The ideology informed justifications for the US acquisition of Native American, Mexican, Filipino, and Puerto Rican territories during the nineteenth century. These backward peoples, the argument went, could not properly use or develop their own territories. Critics of empire and colonization confronted an increasingly popular ideology that endowed America with a technologically driven civilizing mission in the territories it acquired. While the horrific fighting of the First World War somewhat dampened European technological enthusiasm, American enthusiasm for technology remained strong in that bloody conflict's aftermath. Minimal American fighting in that

war, a widespread belief that the carnage resulted from European shortcomings, and rapid US economic growth for much of the 1920s largely driven by the mass consumption of new technologies (such as radios, cars, and appliances) actually helped strengthen America's sense of its technology-based superiority. But did this superiority justify riding roughshod over non-Western peoples, or was the American calling a higher one, demanding a tutelary approach in its international encounters? How internationally engaged Americans answered that question had significant implications for US foreign relations.⁷

The earliest of American encounters with East Asia underscore a desire to "uplift" China and Japan. "Americans," Akira Iriye writes in his synthesis of American-East Asian relations "[believed they] could teach the Chinese and Japanese rudiments of technology and modern science; they could introduce Western ideas and customs; they could assist the Asian governments as they struggled to survive in a turbulent world; above all, Americans could bring Asians to a new and higher level of spirituality [through Christianity]."⁸ While many Americans touted the economic potential of closer US-East Asian relations, they also assumed that closer ties would benefit Asians by promoting a superior Western-style development and culture. Some diplomats, businessmen, and even missionaries no doubt gilded their self-interest (be it through a treaty, trade agreement, or religious conversion) by professing that their activities furthered the American obligation to help and civilize China. Regardless of the self-interest at stake, the effective use of this rhetoric helped generate popular support for particular initiatives in China, which is itself indicative of the sincere convictions of many Americans that their nation was a positive and progressive force in the world.⁹

Historians approaching this subject from the perspectives of both diplomatic history and technology studies concur that US foreign policy have not benefited from the influence of such a narrow ideological prism. Arthur Dudden is critical of the long-standing Euro-American tendency to "superimpose their systems of belief, technology, and social structure" onto the other non-Western peoples of the world. The problem, according to renowned diplomatic historian Michael Hunt, is that "Americans with their unique historical experience and outlook are [likely] to ignore diversity in the world and reduce cultures radically different from their own to familiar easily manageable terms." To Akira Iriye, the dean of American-East Asian relations scholars, the consequences of these "tendencies toward simplification, emotionalism, and dogmatism" are the pursuit of objectives and policies that have "little basis in fact." As a result, Michael Adas – one of the leading

historians of technology and international relations – is not surprised that the story of US foreign relations in with the non-western world is one littered with “limited gains” and “severe setbacks.” And yet, despite an ultimate estrangement from China by the end of the 1940s, a tragic debacle that unfolded in Vietnam in the subsequent decades, and the alienation of other parts of the non-Western world by the early twenty-first century, Adas identifies an “enduring confidence that a superior American aptitude for technological endeavors ensures that American designs for the transformation of non-European societies will be realized.” The subject of Americans and radio in China during the 1920s and 1930s offers yet another example of these self-deluded good intentions gone awry.¹⁰

Idealism, Americanism, and Determinism in International Radio

Radio, its most enthusiastic interwar era proponents claimed, was going to irrevocably change the world. Instantaneous communication and information exchange promised to civilize the uncivilized and forge the bonds of friendship and mutual understanding among the diverse peoples of the world. In this vision, radio was a defining feature in the divide between the “civilized” and “uncivilized” world. For example, an RCA promotional pamphlet from 1930 framed radio as reflective of “our more complex civilization.”¹¹ As Westinghouse Vice President Harry Davis exclaimed, “[c]ivilization progresses in direct ratio to the advance in communication and transportation”¹² President Calvin Coolidge concurred. “Communication is one of the important supports of civilization,” the president said in an address at the 1927 International Radiotelegraph Conference. “If we glance at any of the backward portions of the earth we shall see at once that the methods for the transmission of intelligence are lacking.”¹³ Swagar Sherley, a lawyer for the National Association of Broadcasters, had no doubt about radio’s relationship to advancing civilization. “Civilization itself can be measured by man’s conquest over space,” Sherley declared, “and radio alone, among all forms of energy, gives to man the ability to completely conquer space in terms of time.” To Sherley, the “inventive genius” that resulted in a technology like radio and the “struggle upward” that societies in possession of communications technologies experience came easier to Americans than to the “backward portions of the earth.”¹⁴

The corollary idea that radio could “shrink” the world also entranced many Americans. Closer and more immediate contact between peoples

presumably fostered peace and mutually profitable trade. Consequently, many Americans believed radio possessed a virtually utopian ability to bind peoples together in peace and prosperity. In the aftermath of the brutal First World War, such predictions were difficult to resist. This convergence of radio's positive attributes and the need to avoid another destructive world war informed Radio Corporation of America's president-elect James G. Harbord's comments during an address to the Illinois Manufacturing Association in 1922. "The need of the hour," Harbord told his audience, "is better understanding between peoples, a need to which better communications can contribute more powerfully than any other single agency." To Harbord, a retired general and former Army Deputy Chief of Staff, radio was the key. At the helm of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), Harbord believed he could provide a service "to the people of our country and to our government, and perhaps contribute to guarantee the peace of the world by helping to develop national and international communication." Because of radio, Harbord envisioned a time when "nations may be brought together, the world's prosperity restored and civilization again move forward."¹⁵ "Communications," Harbord insisted a few years later, "tie communities, states, and nations together more securely than one thousand peace treaties."¹⁶

Harbord was simply voicing the era's truisms. Radio, according to one typical article from a 1922 issue of *Collier's*, was "spreading mutual understanding to all sections of the country, unifying our thoughts, ideals, and purposes, making us a strong and well-knit people."¹⁷ Martin Rice, the broadcasting director for General Electric (GE), believed that it required "no strain of imagination" to see that radio would produce "a universal language and the vehicle for complete mutual understanding among the peoples of all civilized nations."¹⁸ Even as tensions rose in Europe and Asia during the 1930s, the same themes continued to reverberate. RCA-subsidiary, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), claimed in a 1936 press release that "radio is rapidly becoming one of the most powerful forces for peace and understanding."¹⁹ That same year, General Electric's assistant director of public relations claimed that international broadcasting initiatives prompt international listeners to come "to the realization that we all have many interests in common, and, as common interests make for friendship, shortwave radio should be an effective means for improving the relationships between peoples."²⁰

Though couched in internationalist rhetoric, the policymakers and corporate officials who promoted global radio in fact worked to

expand the American stake. American radio interests strove to expand their international presence, in tandem with American diplomats who worked to remove any legal roadblocks those ventures encountered. In this light, rhetoric that emphasized radio's potential contributions to fostering international friendship, a universal language, and advancing civilization became blurred with distinct American concerns. In the aftermath of the First World War, British dominance of the world's cable networks during that conflict concerned American policymakers. At the Versailles Conference, the Americans used internationalist rhetoric to push plans for global radio expansion that benefited Americans while reducing the British stranglehold on global communications. "For the most part the internationalism of the 1920s assumed the superiority of American techniques and values," Emily Rosenberg writes with reference to international communications. "Expansionism, national interest, and international betterment were fused."²¹

The hopeful image of radio's civilizing mission reflected a deeply ingrained sense of "technological determinism" in American society. When viewed deterministically, technology emerges as an autonomous agent of change that drives the history of nations and societies while itself remaining immune to worldly influences. For better or worse, people are presumed to be at the mercy of technology and the irreversible influences and impacts it wields. Furthermore, a technology's uses and its consequences are assumed to be inevitable from the moment of invention, there being little anyone can do to alter some preordained trajectory and consequent impact. Both technology's enthusiasts and its critics often fall prey to deterministic analyses: the railroad drove American economic development; the automobile destroys the environment; the Internet creates a global village; the media corrupts children.²² In other words, it is the technology that presumably possesses the agency to affect change, not the people who make, distribute, or use it. Consequently, that radio enthusiasts brought a brand of technological determinism to Asia during the 1920s and 1930s was not surprising, given the deterministic understandings of technology that dominated interwar era commentary on radio's global potential.

Indeed, new communications innovations have historically inspired Americans to consider their long-term implications in starkly deterministic terms. In 1846, one editorial heralded the significance of the telegraph's invention by claiming without reservation that Americans "shall become more and more one people, thinking more alike, acting more alike, and having more one impulse [sic].... Man will immediately respond to man."²³ Such bold assertions echoed James Harbord's

sentiments nearly eighty years later, when he celebrated radio's promise to forge a future where the "thought currents of all humanity will mingle and will ebb and flow across the dividing oceans."²⁴ More recently, the Internet, cell phones, and inexpensive consumer satellite technology were also heralded for that same potential. A 1997 issue of the *New York Times Magazine* dedicated to celebrating technological development claimed, "[t]he latest technology is providing us with more time, more freedom and a growing sense of community – the very things mankind has sought since the Pleistocene era. So much for Orwell."²⁵ By 2005, this timeworn enthusiasm was directed toward "podcasting" – the transmission of radio and Internet broadcasts to portable digital music players. It did not matter whether listeners were "on the beach, at their desk, in the car or walking the dog," one Los Angeles station radio manager mused about podcasting's potential to unify culture. "[T]hey're all listening to the same content."²⁶

So deeply ingrained are these technological determinist views of communications' potential that they persistently pervade the discourse despite the exaggerations apparent with hindsight. The telegraph of the 1840s did not impede the American spiral to the bloody Civil War less than two decades later. 1920s radio did nothing to stop the 1930s descent toward the Second World War in Europe and Asia. Satellite communications could not vanish the Cold War and were even deployed to fight it, despite President Lyndon Johnson's 1967 claim – typical for the Cold War era – that satellite communications promised to create a "partnership" not just between the United States and Soviet Union, but also "among all nations under the sun and stars."²⁷ 1990s predictions that the latest wireless technologies promised to (once again) create a closer and friendlier global community overlooked their use by anti-Western terrorist groups to coordinate devastating attacks against the Western world.

The problem with technological determinism, whether applied to communications or any other technology, is its inherently myopic focus. It blinds the would-be analyst to the ways in which technology itself is shaped, impacted, and directed by its users and the societal context of which it is a part. Technological determinism obscures the way technologies mature under the influence of the economics that propel their development, the politics that define the regulatory environment (or lack thereof), and the social and cultural forces that can both encourage and restrict the various ways individual users deploy new technologies. Although writing about the Internet, Janet Abbate describes a process that might well apply to radio. It is one filled with "unexpected

twists and turns [in] its development" in which "a well-laid plan was abandoned after a short time and replaced by a new approach from an unexpected quarter." The process reflects "users' abilities to shape the network to meet their own objectives."²⁸ Invariably, the utopian visions that often surround the technology at its inception have trouble being realized in light of the unexpected "twists and turns" that subsequently shape a developing technology.

This theme pervades the story of Americans and radio in China between 1919 and 1941. Americans interested in expanding radio into East Asia, whether in its telegraphy or broadcasting form, came to Asia with a set of assumptions about what radio was and what it could accomplish for a society. Those assumptions, dominated by possibilities for economic growth and cultural uplift, grew out of a perception of radio's value to American society. Not always cognizant of the ways in which political, economic, legal, cultural, and social forces in the US shaped radio, these Americans presumed that radio in China should logically follow the existing American model of development. Consequently, the Americans in my case studies consistently misunderstood the motives and objectives of the Chinese and Japanese users and actors, which included political authorities, business interests, and listeners.

This ethnocentric dynamic meshed nicely with determinist assumptions of an autonomous technology that contained its own logic of development. If a particular initiative did not yield the desired outcome, deeply ingrained stereotypes of non-Westerners lacking a capacity for technology offered an easy explanation for the problem. In East Asia, this presumption at times guided American decision-makers in their interactions with their Chinese and Japanese counterparts. Such presumptions underscored a blindness to non-American perspectives and concerns. Consequently, the idealistic and culturally loaded notions of American-inspired progress and civilization camouflaged what, in the final analysis, were primarily self-interested and shortsighted radio endeavors.

As a whole, this study explores how American understandings of radio infused the expectations, decisions, and actions of various officials, businessmen, and private individuals engaged with this technology in the East Asian context. Culturally based convictions about radio's power and potential clouded their approaches to China. The inability to view radio outside the prism of a Euro-American developmental model undermined each radiotelegraphic and broadcasting endeavor. Expectations of profits and international friendship inevitably gave way to monetary loss and international tensions. In many ways, this book is

a cautionary tale about people who put too much faith in the power of the latest and most fashionable technology – as radio was in the 1920s and 1930s – to surmount any and all obstacles it may encounter.

Chapter organization

The book's six chapters explore American initiatives in both radiotelegraphy and broadcasting in China. The first two chapters focus on international radiotelegraphy. Chapter 1 documents the bitter 1920s conflict over radio rights in China between the Federal Telegraph Company and Japan's Mitsui Bussan Kaisha. This radio controversy that led to Federal's ultimate failure in China proved symptomatic of strains in the Japanese-American-Chinese relationship that portended the collapse of the so-called Washington System, a post-World War I framework of international cooperation in East Asia. The second chapter examines RCA's encounter with China's growing nationalism from 1928 through 1935. RCA's 1932 decision to restart its radiotelegraphy business in Japanese-occupied Manchuria provoked Chinese retaliation against RCA. The Chinese courted RCA rival, the International Telephone and Telegraph Company, in an attempt to drive RCA from Shanghai's more lucrative radiotelegraphy market. The dispute and its resolution at The Hague in China's favor ultimately helped augment the power of the Chinese state and changed the dynamics of transitional communications networks that extended far beyond China.

In the third chapter, the focus shifts to broadcasting. The emphasis is on American diplomats' assessments of how US radio interests might take advantage of China's emergent broadcasting market during China's Warlord Era (1916–27) and subsequent reunification under Nationalist control. The chapter demonstrates how American cultural biases undermined American initiatives through their underestimation and misreading of the Nationalist government's determination to combat foreign infringements on Chinese sovereignty. Chapter 4 accounts for W6XBE (later renamed KGEI), the first US-based shortwave station to transmit directly to East Asia beginning in 1939. Starting its broadcasts amidst the Sino-Japanese War that had erupted in 1937 and touted as yet another vehicle to foster international trade and friendship, the station's appeal never extended far beyond the American expatriate audience that had been most excited about its inauguration. Rather than facilitate cross-cultural exchange, W6XBE–KGEI instead worked to strengthen individual senses of American identity among its American listeners who often longed for home.

With the United States and Japan drifting toward war in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Japanese efforts to stifle American broadcasting initiatives in China provide the backdrop to Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 analyzes the American missionary movement's broadcasting initiatives on the eve of the Japanese-American Pacific War that erupted in 1941. Underscoring a connection between missionaries' Christian and American identities, the anti-Japanese tone of missionary broadcasts during this period (especially after the Sino-Japanese War began in 1937) echoed the animosities held by a large cross-section of Americans, secular and religious alike. Consequently, by 1941 highly politicized American missionary broadcasts became a casualty of Japanese jamming practices designed to suppress anti-Japanese sentiment attributed to all American media. The sixth and final chapter shifts attention to the American radio newscasts reaching China during the Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese-American dispute over news that followed. In this news clash that preceded the Pacific War, the tendency of the main American and Japanese actors to interpret news through the lens of their respective national sensibilities led to incompatible understandings about the meaning and significance of American newscasts. The subsequent Japanese jamming of American news in turn illuminated the widening Japanese-American divide over China by the early 1940s as the two antagonists spiraled toward war in 1941.

Taken together, these chapters underscore the tremendous gap between popular interwar era assumptions about radio and the actual outcomes of American radio initiatives in China. In these examples, neither trade nor international friendship followed in radio's wake. Instead, radio helped magnify and intensify the growing international divides of the interwar period. A central reason for this dichotomy between expectations and results was the inability of the various Americans involved to move beyond their own culturally based assumptions about radio. Deterministic convictions about radio, infused with cultural stereotypes, crippled the American ability to understand the main issues and concerns that occupied the Chinese and Japanese who encountered American radio throughout this period.

Poorly considered radio strategies predictably antagonized the Chinese in an era of rising nationalism; meanwhile, Japanese actors, under the aegis of military imperialism were also motivated to combat the expansion of the American radio presence. Each American radio initiative in China explored in this study provoked opposition from either Chinese or Japanese quarters (sometimes both) and fell victim to it. In the end, these ill-fated examples of American radio in East Asia

illustrate one over-arching theme: technologically deterministic views of radio intersected with the activities of the radio industry, international rivalries in interwar China, growing Chinese nationalism, and Japanese imperialism to discourage the expansion – and indeed in some cases compel the contraction – of an American presence in East Asian radio. The persistent difficulties American radio encountered in China reflected both the wider deterioration of Japanese-American relations and rising tensions in Chinese-American relations on the eve of the Pacific War.

As a result, the chapters that follow underscore the consistently costly consequences that American radio interests and their government supporters faced by not adequately understanding the environment in which they operated. In the process, this book also underscores a related and pervasive theme in the study of US foreign relations that has gained credence since the Vietnam War: the application of American power and American technology alone are limited in their ability to affect change and achieve American goals abroad. Moreover, those limits are more likely to be confronted by those people who insist on embarking on international initiatives while lacking an informed and thoughtful understanding of the environment in which Americans will be engaging.

Admittedly, this study's emphasis on the American perspective and its basis in English-language sources such as periodicals, government and corporate archives, and memoirs renders the depiction of the Asian side incomplete. In light of this weakness, the few accounts that address interwar era society and radio in East Asia have been quite helpful. Of these, Carlton Benson's work on radio in Shanghai during the 1920s and 1930s has been the most valuable secondary source for understanding the Chinese governmental and societal relationship to radio.²⁹ For the Japanese side, Gregory Kasza and Roger Purdy's studies of Japanese mass media and news during the first half of the twentieth century were invaluable.³⁰ Additionally, this study has benefited from the outpouring of foreign relations studies that offer thoughtful consideration of Chinese motivations and actions toward the West and Japan during the interwar era (especially in regard to the interwar era rise of Chinese nationalism and anti-imperialism).³¹ I have also benefited from the translations of Chinese and Japanese government documents that are kept in US archives.

Overall, these sources offer a useful starting point to consider the Chinese and Japanese attitudes toward American radio in East Asia. My aim throughout has been to balance my analysis of the American

perspective with an informed and thoughtful assessment of the Asian side of this story – indeed, my analysis of the American perspective depends on locating it in the Asian context. As research into relevant Chinese and Japanese archives on radio proceeds, such conclusions will certainly be expanded or modified, and thereby offer even more useful and complete insights into radio's significance during this period of American-East Asian relations.

1

“We Owe Nothing to Their Sensibilities”: Federal Telegraph, the Open Door, and the Washington System in 1920s China

Jacob Schurman, the American Minister to China, was elated when the Federal Telegraph Company of California reached an agreement with the Chinese government in January 1921. This agreement provided for the first radiotelegraphy link between China and the United States. “In more than one direction the present personnel of the Chinese government is anxious for a close understanding with the United States,” Schurman reported to Washington. The contract proposed building five stations, the main one in Shanghai and four low power stations in Harbin, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai. The prospective stations promised to be “an important agency of cooperation between the two governments and peoples,” Schurman claimed. “From all aspects, political, military, and commercial” the ebullient Minister concluded, “the conclusion of this contract is a cause for greatest satisfaction.”¹

Federal Telegraph certainly seemed poised for success in China. It enjoyed the strong bipartisan support of the two previous Democratic ministers to China as well as that of the Republican Schurman. In 1922, American radio giant RCA became Federal’s business partner. Everything seemed in place for establishing a lucrative business in direct trans-Pacific communications. Yet by 1929, Federal was abandoned by its American government backers, lost the financial support of RCA, and had its contracts cancelled by a new Chinese government. This chapter explores the tangled tale of how Federal’s project was mired in international controversy from the outset. Disputes over the legal rights to participation in China’s emerging radiotelegraphy market pitted



Figure 1.1 Jacob Gould Schurman, 1925 (National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

the United States and Federal against Japan, China, and even Britain. Schurman's dream of radiotelegraphy "increasing the intimacy of both Governments and the peoples of two nations"² quickly soured as the Federal's project fell victim to irreconcilable differences.

The Federal debacle underscores a growing divide that plagued inter-war era American-Chinese-Japanese relations. The machinations that surrounded the radio dispute highlighted the low regard with which the involved Americans held Chinese nationalism. At the same time, the Americans insisted that the "Open Door" policy of equal economic

opportunity in China for all powers entitled Federal to build its stations. This position contrasted sharply with Japan's insistence that its exclusive radio rights in the country were paramount to Japanese economic and strategic security. On China's side, the growing Chinese nationalism and anti-imperialism of the era complicated both American and Japanese efforts to pursue their radio projects. Many Chinese authorities saw Federal as merely the latest foreign intrusion into China. The actions of American diplomats and corporate officials often served to solidify that perception, and Chinese officials who favored Japanese interests gladly held Federal accountable for those missteps. Even pro-American Chinese officials had to distance themselves from the controversial project. Consequently, Federal and its government supporters alienated enough of influential Chinese and Japanese opinion to doom its once promising project.

Ironically, this bitter radio dispute arose in the midst of negotiating the cooperative but ill-fated "Washington System." During the autumn and winter of 1921–22, the "Great Powers," including the United States and Japan, met in the US capitol to negotiate disarmament in Asia, economic opportunity in China, and the restoration of Chinese sovereignty. As the concurring Federal controversy illustrates, the signatories to the resulting treaties proved unable to reconcile their respective long-term self-interests with the cooperative framework to which they pledged themselves. The Federal project captured this tension between international promises of cooperation and determined pursuits of parochial objectives, and it ultimately helped contribute to the demise of the Washington System itself.

Opening and closing doors: Negotiating for Federal Telegraph in China

Minister Jacob Schurman's early enthusiasm for Federal Telegraph's proposed China project was typical. Like other American diplomats, he took it for granted that this radiotelegraphic initiative would propel closer Sino-American relations while enhancing profitable trans-Pacific trade. In 1919, Paul Reinsch, then the American minister in China, signaled to Washington his support of Federal's ongoing efforts to secure a contract. He believed the proposed project promised to benefit both American trade and Chinese development. Reinsch, a former professor of East Asian history at the University of Wisconsin who had championed closer Sino-American ties throughout his career, was convinced that "a little vision and the application of American scientific methods would transform China."³ After Reinsch resigned later that same year in protest over what he saw as a weak, pro-Japanese China policy of President

Woodrow Wilson's administration, his successor Charles Crane continued to support Federal. Crane, a personal friend and strong supporter of the Democrat Wilson, believed there was "ample reason to suppose that in the near future this method of communication, because of its speed and cheapness, will transcend all others in its influence on trade and popular sentiment."⁴ Schurman, Republican President Warren Harding's choice for Minister to China, concurred. The past president of Cornell University, former philosophy professor, and psychologist turned diplomat, praised Crane for his persistent efforts that enabled the Federal agreement to be struck in the twilight of the Wilson administration.⁵

The US Open Door policy fueled this official enthusiasm for Federal. Many Americans saw in China a huge potential market for the United States. In this view, the China market offered a possible panacea for the recurring economic turbulence that plagued the United States since the nineteenth century. Direct Sino-American radiotelegraphic connections could improve access to that fabled market. However, other European powers along with Japan also eyed the China market for their own economic and strategic purposes. Against this backdrop, China's deepening domestic difficulties and increasing political disorder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries encouraged a pattern of Western imperialist economic and political expansion into China. In contrast to the other powers, however, the US policy toward China promoted open access to that country's potentially lucrative markets at the expense of the quasi-colonial and exclusionary arrangements preferred by its rivals. Based on array of Sino-American treaties dating back to the nineteenth century, the Americans entered the twentieth century demanding that the powers respect equal economic opportunity in China and minimize the creation of foreign-dominated "spheres of influence." These demands earned the grudging – if not always faithful – acceptance of the powers.⁶

Open Door economic policies, however, could not stop a century of deteriorating economic and social conditions compounded by expanding Western imperialism that had left China in disarray by the twentieth century. Shortly after China's Qing Dynasty fell from power in 1911, the country slipped into civil war and warlordism. Throughout the late 1910s and into the 1920s, armies whose power extended only as far as the areas they occupied ousted one another from the capital of Beijing on a regular basis; other warlords ruled China's various provinces practically as separate countries.⁷ Despite this turmoil, many Americans maintained an Open Door-inspired faith that, if stabilized, China could become an important American economic and political partner in East Asia.

As Federal Telegraph turned its attention to China in the late 1910s, linking American activities in China to the Open Door ideal helped generate wide-ranging support within the US. At a time when the American economy had fallen into a post-World War I recession, the prospect of tapping into China's vast market of 400 million people possessed broad appeal. The Open Door's allusion to a "special friendship" between a vulnerable China and a benevolent United States positioned against the more predatory powers also appealed to a significant constituency of missionaries and their supporters. To these people, the Open Door policy represented an American moral obligation to serve as China's paternalistic defender and "civilizer" as they worked to Christianize the Chinese nation. Concurrently, a deep faith in scientific and technological progress had become interwoven with the ideals of the Open Door in the minds of many Americans who had embraced the Progressive Era's notion that scientific knowledge and the work of experts could create more efficient, equitable, and prosperous societies throughout the world. That notion meshed nicely with the concern for troubled China's welfare implied in the Open Door ideal. Many Progressive reformers and reform-minded officials called for American assistance in the reform and development of China. Whatever the particular motivation and however self-serving it may have been, many Americans believed that the Open Door policy benefited both China and the United States, thereby making the Open Door a rallying cry of American support for China.⁸

Radio, as a newly developing technology, fit neatly into this Open Door framework. The Federal Company's savvy and politically connected president, Rennie P. Schwerin, effectively appealed to the Open Door policy to solidify key American support behind his China endeavor. Schwerin, who had done stints as president of Associated Oil Company and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, had been plucked out of retirement in 1919 to revive the struggling enterprise. Under Schwerin's watch, the latter company, which was built around trans-Pacific shipping, relied heavily on the Chinese labor market to staff its ships. Pacific Mail, however, went out of business following the 1915 passage of the labor union-supported Seaman's Act, which mandated that 70 percent of crewmembers understand English-language commands. Now at Federal, Schwerin once again looked to the China market as critical to restoring his new company's economic health, and he promptly went to work, building official support for such an initiative. He cited China's nineteenth-century treaty obligations that promised the "open door" ideal of equal commercial opportunity. He went beyond legal obligations and spoke of

Federal's "moral right" to pursue its China project.⁹ Schwerin celebrated the project's potential to contribute to technological "efficiency" and emphasized how "free communications" served the American national interest.¹⁰ Having served as the Republican Party's west coast campaign manager during Warren Harding's successful 1920 presidential run, Schwerin had every reason to believe the new Harding administration would take his appeals seriously.¹¹

The administration came through for Schwerin. Two weeks into Harding's term, the Navy Department and Federal struck a deal by which the Navy returned to Federal's control at no cost key patents the company had previously sold to the Navy. Not needed by the Navy anymore, Federal's control of these patents were essential to company's ability to execute its State Department-supported China contract. Harding's Secretary of State, Charles Hughes, subsequently reaffirmed US support of Federal Telegraph, declaring that the proposed radio project was "founded upon a policy of vitalizing and extending the principle of the open door rather than countenancing limitations or restrictions upon its implications."¹²

Hughes was also responding to strong Japanese protests against Federal. In February 1918, Japan's Mitsui Bussan Kaisha¹³ had negotiated a communications agreement with China's Ministry of the Navy. This contract gave Mitsui a full monopoly on China's international communications once a sixty-year monopoly arrangement with Denmark's Great Northern Telegraph Company lapsed in 1931. As the Japanese pointed out, the Federal agreement did not, as Mitsui's had, recognize such legally binding and pre-existing agreements. Britain and Denmark joined the Japanese protest. The Danish objected to Federal's infringement on Great Northern's still-intact monopoly concession for all international communications. The British claimed Federal's contract undermined agreements signed between British Marconi and the China's Ministry of War in 1918 and 1919, which granted Marconi exclusive rights to supply and manufacture radio equipment for China.¹⁴

Japan, however, pressed its grievance most vigorously after 1921. Upon the signing of the Federal contracts, Japan's Minister in Washington Yukichi Obata registered objections with both Chinese and American officials. "I lost no time," Obata remarked, "in drawing the attention of the Chinese Government to the position of the Japanese company." Obata pointed out that Mitsui's exclusive contract guaranteed the company certain revenue streams, which would be impossible to achieve if the Japanese company was forced to compete with Federal's Sino-American connections. The Japanese protest compared the prospect of

Federal and Mitsui competing against one another to the logic of building and operating two rival railroads parallel to one another, inevitably driving each other out of business. Obata insisted China's Ministry of Communications renounce its agreement with Federal.¹⁵

Obata's defense of Mitsui against Federal reflected China's centrality to Japan's foreign policy. Adding further urgency to the Mitsui situation was that Japan's rapidly expanding electrical communications manufacturing industries demanded new export markets. As a relative latecomer to industrialization and imperialism, many Japanese leaders believed that they had to exploit Japan's proximity to China to "catch up" to the West. Manchuria figured prominently in these calculations. A Japanese "sphere of influence" in China's northeast, Manchuria also provided essential mineral resources such as coal and iron that fueled Japan's expanding economy. Growing Chinese radicalism further concerned the leadership, including the Crown Prince and Regent Hirohito. Left unchecked, radical politics could fuel a movement to drive the Japanese out of China, while the export of those radical ideas from China could possibly destabilize Japan's increasingly volatile politics. From the Japanese perspective, this array of factors argued in favor of maintaining the formidable Japanese presence in China.¹⁶ Federal's intrusion threatened to complicate these goals by establishing an autonomous American presence, particularly with regard to Federal's proposed station in the Manchurian city of Harbin.

At this point in the early 1920s, the Japanese government forged particularly close ties to Mitsui. The cabinet formed by the ruling Seiyukai Party was sometimes identified as the "Mitsui Cabinet," due to its close ties to the Japanese corporate giant.¹⁷ Hard feelings perhaps compounded the reaction against the Federal project. Mitsui had approached Federal in 1919 about purchasing Federal equipment to use in the Mitsui project, only to see Federal go off to negotiate its own rival agreement.¹⁸

The political instability and bureaucratic rivalry endemic to China at this time further fueled the emerging radio controversy. Between the signing of the 1918 Mitsui and 1921 Federal contracts, two heads of state and five cabinets had led China.¹⁹ During that time, no ministry had established clear jurisdiction over radio. The Communications, War, and Navy ministries all claimed authority over this new communications technology and the revenue that it might generate. Amidst the constant official turnover in Beijing, Federal signed its 1921 agreement with the Communications Ministry. Mitsui secured its 1918 concession from the Navy Ministry. British Marconi's agreements came

through the War Ministry in 1918 and 1919.²⁰ With the British and Japanese companies each claiming to have signed a legitimate contract that Federal violated, a dispute was inevitable.

Amidst the nascent controversy, Federal confronted a particularly unfavorable development on the Chinese side in early 1921. Yet another government turnover in China had ousted the pro-American authorities responsible for negotiating the initial Federal agreement. Even worse, the new Communications Minister, Zhang Zhidan [Chang Chih-t'an], was a bitter political foe of his pro-Federal predecessor, Ye Gongchuo [Yeh Kung-ch'o].²¹ Predictably, ongoing negotiations to clarify the Chinese role in funding the project immediately stalled.

Sensing that the deadlocked financial negotiations reflected a growing reluctance to execute Federal's contract, American consular reports from Beijing blamed the problems on the new Premier, Jin Yongpeng [Chin Yun-p'eng]. As War Minister in an earlier government, Jin had signed an unpopular military pact that solidified the Japanese army's position on the mainland. In return, his government had received generous (and still outstanding) loans from the Japanese. Viewed as little more than a Japanese tool, one American official dismissed Jin as "naturally a man of simple, timid, and rather stupid character."²²

American officials typically downplayed the idea that Chinese officials might have legitimate concerns about Federal. The new Foreign Minister Yan Huiqing [W.W. Yen] had, in fact, received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Virginia in 1900 and worked for the Chinese Minister in Washington in 1908. One report to Washington assessing the new cabinet exempted Yan from the charge of pro-Japanese sympathies laid at the feet of his cabinet colleagues.²³ But it was Yan who had questioned the logic of going forward with the project once he saw "three friendly nations" at loggerheads on the eve of the Washington Conference.²⁴ American officials, however, dismissed Yan's concerns as those coming from a weak-kneed official succumbing to the pressures of his less-than-earnest cabinet colleagues.²⁵ "I think the Minister of Foreign Affairs," wrote an embassy official to the Secretary of State, "is oversensitive to protests which are not serious in nature, and that it is he who now obstructs the contract."²⁶ Secretary of State Charles Hughes sent a strongly worded letter to Yan lambasting the Foreign Minister for his "incomprehensible" concerns about the Washington Conference and his "defection" from an Open Door policy that the Chinese government should "fully and loyally" share with the United States.²⁷

Foreign Minister Yan vigorously challenged Hughes' charges. Considering his educational and diplomatic experience in the United

States, Yan no doubt understood the political potency of the Open Door policy in America. Still, according to Yan, Federal's contract and the Open Door were two separate issues. Simply put, China could not move forward with Federal until resolving the international protests. The Japanese and British were threatening to claim substantial monetary damages if their contracts were violated. Japan's looming threat to recall its outstanding loans – a substantial sum by the early 1920s – added to Yan's concerns. Any such retaliatory action would probably spell the demise of the current regime. Yan explained that China expected cooperation, not antagonism, to evolve out of improving China's radio communications, but to date the Federal contract only brought the latter.²⁸

Surprisingly, only days following this acrid exchange, Federal and the Chinese authorities broke the impasse that plagued the financial negotiations. The parties signed a supplementary agreement that spelled out the amount, terms, and security of the bonds necessary to fund the Chinese portion of Federal's project.²⁹ This development should have silenced the view that the new regime in Beijing was intractably pro-Japanese.

Yet Minister Jacob Schurman interpreted the September 1921 agreement differently. "[H]ad it not been for the extremely firm stand taken by the American Government and its allusion to the whole Open Door policy in this connection ...," Schurman wrote Secretary of State Charles Hughes, "the contract might well have been abandoned by the Chinese government."³⁰ Schurman's interpretation reflected a conviction popular in diplomatic circles that a firm hand must be taken in negotiating with the Chinese, who were liable to corruption and moral weakness. Dating back to his diplomatic work in turn-of-the-century Philippines, Schurman also believed in the "just and beneficent intensions of the United States." He rejected the type of nationalist politics that questioned the American commitment to promoting beneficial Western-style development in non-Western countries like the Philippines and China. This mindset further soured Schurman's opinion on the legitimacy of Chinese opposition to the American radio project. Given these parameters, Schurman interpreted all opposition to American objectives to be, at best, shortsighted.³¹

Schurman's posturing aside, the adjournment of Washington Conference in early 1922 seemingly should have created a more favorable atmosphere for Federal's project. The Conference resulted in three treaties that addressed American concerns about the military balance of power in Asia and the Open Door in China. The Four Power treaty replaced the 1902 Anglo-Japanese alliance with a multinational agreement that required the United States, Japan, Britain, and France to

consult with each other whenever their respective rights or possessions in East Asia appeared threatened. The naval limitations imposed by the Five Power Treaty (ratified by the "Four Power" signatories along with Italy) tried to end a burgeoning naval arms race in the Pacific. The Nine Power Treaty – whose adherents included the United States, Japan, and China – committed the signatories to respecting the Open Door policy. This treaty also committed the powers to work with China in reaching new agreements that would gradually abolish foreign privilege and place China's relations with foreign powers on the basis of equality.³²

Given the Washington Conference's commitment to international cooperation and its affirmation of the Open Door, Federal still confronted one additional obstacle: funding. Although the 1921 bond agreement spelled out China's obligations to the project, Federal lacked the funds to begin its share of the work. Finding investors willing to risk their capital for a contract mired in international protest in a country wracked by chronic instability, civil war, and a history of defaulting on its bonds proved difficult. "I regret to say that I have not found among American bankers any particular or enthusiastic desire to invest in China," Federal President Rennie Schwerin lamented to Hughes. "Three times we have been practically financed," Schwerin recounted, "and then conditions have been made which rendered it impossible to bring financing to a final issue." State Department efforts on behalf of Federal similarly fell short.³³

Fortunately for Schwerin, in the summer of 1922 RCA decided to partner with Federal in a joint venture. To RCA, the risks appeared manageable. RCA planned to employ its extensive contacts with the Japanese and the British to smooth over objections to the Federal project.³⁴ Moreover, Federal's contract and the subsequent bond agreement appeared legally sound. "I see no reason to doubt that these two agreements are properly authorized and executed so as to bind the Government of the Republic of China so far as a government can be bound," reported RCA's general counsel John Griggs in early 1922.³⁵

From RCA's perspective, Chinese instability posed the biggest risk. China's persistently turbulent domestic situation had flared up once again in 1922, and Griggs wondered what would happen to the contracts if the current regime fell. What if, Griggs speculated, the latest insurrection left the contracts at the mercy provincial governments not beholden to international obligations? This issue was particularly important to consider in light of China's rising nationalism and anti-foreignism in the 1920s. "What the future of that country will be it is impossible to foresee," Griggs warned. "All the risks and uncertainties

connected with such a state of affairs must be taken by anyone interested in this concession."³⁶

RCA was willing to take that risk. The two companies created the Federal Telegraph Company of Delaware. RCA controlled 70 percent of Delaware Federal's stock, and held the right to name the chairman to the board of directors, which was otherwise evenly divided between RCA and the original Federal Telegraph Company of California. The California Federal Company then transferred its Chinese contractual rights to the new Delaware Company. Delaware Federal retained Rennie Schwerin as president. Schwerin immediately traveled to China to explain the new arrangement and ask for an extension of the contractual deadlines that had lapsed during the deadlock.³⁷

Griggs' concerns about China proved prophetic. The Chinese government dissolved into warlord battles by the time Schwerin arrived in November 1922. "I have to submit that during the time I have been here," a frustrated Schwerin wrote to Secretary of State Hughes, "there has been four changes of administration." A reputedly pro-American administration that took control in February 1923 did not briskly move the project forward as hoped. "I have practically had but three months to work in and with a cabinet that was entirely unfamiliar with the Federal contract," Schwerin lamented in June 1923, more than half a year into his stay in China. Schwerin now confronted a looming July 15, 1923 deadline, one RCA set for resolving outstanding contractual issues with China before RCA would exercise its right to void the partnership.³⁸

At this vulnerable juncture, Japan made it clear that regardless of the Washington Conference agreements, it did not intend to allow Federal to go forward. Japan's Minister in China, Yoshizawa Kenkichi, took advantage of the continuing delays to try and intimidate the new Chinese regime with the threat of military action and a recall of loans. In Washington, the Japanese Ambassador Hanihara Masanao, who otherwise enjoyed a good relationship with Secretary of State Hughes, made it clear that the Japanese government had no intention of ever dropping its opposition to Federal. With July 15 fast approaching, Schwerin himself began to feel "deep concern and anxiety" that the project was doomed.³⁹

The new Chinese Foreign Minister Gu Weijun [Wellington Koo] intervened with less than forty-eight hours to spare. Gu, known for his pro-American leanings, secured a Cabinet resolution confirming Delaware Federal's right to execute the original California Federal contract. The American-educated Gu insisted on issuing a simple statement, dated July 13, 1922, that affirmed Delaware Federal's rights to execute the original Federal contract and the corollary 1921 bond agreement. The Ministry of

Communications “emphatically objected to signing anything that would suggest the original Federal agreements had lapsed and that a new contract was being negotiated to replace them.” Minister Schurman explained to the Secretary of State. Anything resembling a new contract could “expose the Cabinet to Japanese, parliamentary, and political attack.”⁴⁰



Figure 1.2 Gu Weijun, date unknown (Harris and Ewing Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

If the prospect of provoking Japan alarmed Gu, his fear of domestic political opposition was also real. Chinese nationalism and anti-foreignism exploded at the end of World War I. The unrest first erupted in response to the Allies' decision to transfer defeated Germany's concession in Shandong to Japan rather than restore full sovereignty to China, which had also contributed to the Allied war effort. By the end of 1922, Chinese nationalism and xenophobia remained potent. Delays in implementing the Washington Conference's treaty obligations to roll back extraterritorial rights played a part. Not only had China not regained its sovereignty as expected, but continuing foreign control over Chinese tariffs had also deprived the perpetually strapped Chinese government of desperately needed revenue. The so-called Zhili regime that Gu served appealed to increasingly impatient Chinese nationalist sentiment by publicly condemning the Washington powers' refusal to abide by the multipower agreements.⁴¹

In this climate of heightened nationalism, Federal still faced significant obstacles despite the affirmation of its contractual rights. In particular, the Ministry of Communications issued three demands that troubled Federal. Accepting those demands would, in effect, make the Ministry Federal's equal partner. First, the Ministry insisted on a new bond agreement, since the old one required them to pay interest for the period during which the project remained stalemated. Second, it demanded coequal authority over dispensing Chinese funds. Third, the Ministry insisted on the right to audit the project's books. Taken together, these demands captured China's concerns about foreign involvement in and exploitation of the Chinese economy. Moreover, despite the confirming Federal Delaware's legal standing to execute the 1921 contract, the Ministry of Communications still had leverage. It could refuse to release Chinese funding for the project or withhold the land necessary for construction until its demands weremet.⁴²

Sino-American negotiations to end this latest impasse did not go smoothly. Shi Zhaoji [Alfred Sze], the Chinese Minister in Washington, received instructions from Beijing to negotiate with Schwerin. The Federal President had just returned to the US after his extended stay in China.⁴³ Shi was a 1901 Cornell graduate, a former official in the ministries of Communications and Foreign Affairs, and leader of the Chinese delegation to the Washington Conference; he was as well-versed as anybody in the issues at hand in the Federal stalemate.⁴⁴ The Chinese minister quickly grew disgusted with Schwerin. Shi and his staff found the Federal president's habit of producing long, convoluted



Figure 1.3 Shi Zhaoji, 1936 (Harris and Ewing Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

counterproposals to Chinese demands particularly galling. Schwerin seemed to want to avoid any concession to Chinese concerns. Schwerin adamantly refused to consider Shi's proposal that a Chinese government official be empowered with real decision-making authority over the Federal project to protect Chinese interests. This official, the Federal president feared, could operate as a Japanese agent and generate infinite delays.⁴⁵ By the middle of 1924, negotiations broke down.



Figure 1.4 James G. Harbord, date unknown (George Grantham Bain Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

Shi's concerns dated back to the Washington Conference, where he had done his best to minimize foreign control over China's electrical communications.⁴⁶ In a confidential cable to Gu regarding Federal (intercepted, however, by the Americans), Shi wrote, "I am heartily in favor of



Figure 1.5 Owen D. Young, date unknown (George Grantham Bain Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

the project." "If the contract fails," he added, "the Chinese government will be liable for damages." Still, Shi insisted on protecting China's interests in the Federal project.⁴⁷ State Department Far Eastern Division head John MacMurray reported that the Chinese Minister "is frankly afraid

that any action by him favorable to the Federal enterprise will be misrepresented by his subordinates as a surrender of Chinese interests."⁴⁸ From Beijing, American Chargé de Affairs Edward Bell conveyed the concurring Ministry of Communications position that "the whole enterprise is a joint one and that inasmuch as Chinese government funds are being expended it is the right of the government to supervise the method of construction and also the expenditures made."⁴⁹

Schwerin, however, dismissed the legitimacy of nationalist concerns and focused, instead, on what he saw as the behind-the-scenes machinations of the Japanese. In fact, Schwerin's public rants against the Japanese raised serious concerns at RCA. The company, after all, did lucrative business with Japan. As early as autumn 1923, RCA President James Harbord shared with RCA Chairmen Owen Young his concerns about "the amount of talking our new associate is doing on the subject of his troubles." Schwerin's diatribes not only made him look "bitter," but they also coincided with RCA's ongoing negotiations with Japan to extend an important contract with that country. Schwerin, Harbord observed, "is certainly not making it any easier for us in Japan, now or in the future." Harbord insisted that the outspoken Federal president tone down the rhetoric. "I have no quarrel with your opinion of Japan or the Japanese," Harbord began lightly, but "if the idea gets current in Japan that the Radio Corporation is inimical to Japan or Japanese interests, it will damage our business to an extent that it will take many years of successful operation on the part of the Federal of Delaware to offset." He closed by asking Schwerin to consider RCA's perspective before spouting off again.⁵⁰

As 1924 came to a close, the Federal stalemate remained unresolved. While both the United States and Japan publicly claimed their adherence to the cooperative framework established by the Washington System, neither party signaled any willingness to adjust their opposing positions on Federal. The Chinese nationalism that threatened Federal continued to strengthen. RCA's public commitment to Schwerin's Federal project camouflaged growing doubts about the logic of continuing the partnership. At mid-decade, Federal Telegraph's China ambitions were perilously close to demise.

Locking the Open Door: Federal Telegraph in the shadow of the Washington system

On Christmas Eve 1924, Japan proposed to the State Department a solution for the Federal stalemate. "Holding to the principle of international

cooperation instead of international competition, and desiring to help China out of her present difficulty," the Japanese Embassy wrote, "the Japanese government are [sic] willing to approach the question from a new angle that may lead to a speedy and practical settlement of the dispute." Supported by the British, the Japanese proposed a threefold cooperative structure in which Mitsui, Federal and Marconi would pool their rights. The day-to-day operation of wireless telegraphy within China would be placed under the control of the Chinese government, while the now-completed Mitsui station would handle the radio traffic out of Beijing. All parties in the consortium would share in the profits. "The proposed solution is believed to be in line...with all basic principles embodied in the Nine Power Treaty of Washington."⁵¹

The timing of the Japanese offer was calculated and deliberate, and its reference to the Washington System disingenuous. A succession of warlord battles had just ousted the Zhili government from Beijing and put the incontrovertibly pro-Japanese Fengtian faction in power. By 1924, Zhili's successful appeals to surging Chinese nationalism and its growing military strength made the faction a credible – and to Japan, intolerable – threat to bring all of China, including Manchuria, under its rule. The Japanese responded by providing the Fengtian group with weapons, intelligence, propaganda, and even direct Japanese military support.⁵² The Japanese decision to assist Fengtian violated the Washington Conference protocols on noninterference in internal Chinese affairs. After a debilitating campaign – even by the standards of the Warlord Era – the weary Fengtian group occupied Beijing and named the notoriously pro-Japanese Duan Qirui as Prime Minister. By December 1924, the Japanese could be confident that the new regime in Beijing would reliably back Japanese interests, including, of course, Mitsui.⁵³

An American counterproposal went nowhere. In April 1925 the Americans suggested an arrangement whereby both Federal and Mitsui would operate out of Beijing, each monopolizing all traffic to their respective countries and competing for all other business.⁵⁴ The Japanese rejected the proposal outright. As usual, the Japanese reply claimed, the United States refused to acknowledge that the Federal agreement violated Mitsui's contractual rights, and also refused to acknowledge that China's radiotelegraphy market would not support two high powered stations for international communications. For these reasons, "[t]he Japanese Government...[is] unable to concur with the views set forth in the American counter-proposal."⁵⁵ Duan Qirui, meanwhile, expressed his growing irritation over the whole Federal fiasco to Minister Schurman, while his Minister of Communications flatly

told an RCA representative that Federal would remain blocked until the company satisfactorily addressed Japanese concerns.⁵⁶

Mitsui had another reason to stand firm against Federal. The Japanese company knew that RCA was ready to abandon the project. At the end of 1924, RCA Chairman Owen Young had privately approached Mitsui through a third party and indicated his regret at getting involved in the whole Federal fiasco. He felt trapped by the American policy supporting Federal, which now prevented RCA from pursuing its usual international strategy of cooperative consortiums. "He has my full sympathy in his position," Mitsui chief Takuma Dan wrote to Young's intermediary, "which placed him under the injunction of Washington authorities to hold apparently views that were not of his own." Moreover, Young implicitly encouraged Mitsui to stand firm by letting Takuma know he sensed a coming reorientation in US policy that would facilitate RCA's cooperation with Japan in China. "It gives me great pleasure to learn ...," Takuma wrote, "that the State Department is being gradually disposed through Mr. Young's intimation to look upon with favour a cooperative scheme."⁵⁷



Figure 1.6 John V.A. MacMurray, 1924 (National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

Indeed, the new Minister in Beijing, John MacMurray, had already contemplated disengaging American support from Federal. For MacMurray, it was a reversal. Prior to arriving in China, MacMurray supported his predecessor Jacob Schurman's backing of Federal, including Schurman's staunch opposition to giving a Chinese official decision-making authority over the construction of the stations. MacMurray, previously the Washington-based head of the Far Eastern Affairs division, also shared Schurman's support of gradualism and disdain for radical nationalism. The Princeton and Columbia-educated MacMurray had served as an American delegate to the Washington Conference, where he helped shape the Washington consensus on pursuing gradual reform in China (in opposition to nationalist demands for a more rapid rollback of imperialism). He also had little patience for Chinese nationalist concerns about the Federal project. "We owe nothing to their sensibilities," he proclaimed in 1923.⁵⁸

Events in China, however, soon forced MacMurray to reconsider that position on Federal, if not his intransigence against Chinese nationalism. On May 30, 1925 British forces brutally shot Chinese demonstrators at a labor protest in Shanghai, killing several. The ferocity of the Chinese reaction that followed in the subsequent May Thirtieth movement reflected the growing power of Chinese nationalist and anti-imperial feeling. It manifested itself in demonstrations in at least twenty-eight other cities, incorporating demonstrators from all walks of life. Strikes spread, confrontations with foreigners increased, Chinese fatalities in those confrontations multiplied, and the spiral of violence plaguing the country shot upward. Even the Young Women's Christian Association – a missionary reform organization generally considered sympathetic to Chinese aspirations – was not prepared for the depth of animosity foreigners now faced. Describing the attitude of her fellow missionaries as being "in a sort of trance," Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Secretary Helen Thoburn remembered how "a few prophetic Chinese were trying to get [the Western missionary movement] to wake up and see what a tide of feeling was mounting in China."⁵⁹

MacMurray had arrived in China amidst this violence. MacMurray advocated taking a firm stand against radical Chinese nationalism under the aegis of the Washington System's emphasis on cooperation among the powers, particularly Japan. MacMurray believed it was essential to keep the powers on the same page about *gradually* relinquishing extraterritorial rights. He feared that shortsighted individual accommodations with this violent nationalism might result in Great Power conflict over how to approach future complications in China. MacMurray now saw that shifting US support away from Federal could

promote cooperation with Japan. Along these lines, by 1926 MacMurray suggested that the United States work directly with Japan to reach a settlement to the radio controversy on the basis of the 1924 Christmas Eve proposal.⁶⁰

MacMurray found support for this position from the Division of Far Eastern affairs that he once led. Nelson Johnson, MacMurray's successor, also believed that the policy of supporting Federal reached a dead end largely due to Chinese intransigence. After meeting with RCA's James Harbord in May 1926, Johnson invited the like-minded executive to draft the telegram that the State Department planned to send to the Chinese government. The resulting message underscored US frustrations. "The United States Government has consistently supported the principle of the 'Open Door' in China with regard to its external radio communications for five years," Harbord's draft began. "It has done this although the action of the Chinese Government indicates that it is either no longer in favor of the open door principle or is, at least, indifferent to it." Precisely who Johnson and Harbord thought this expression of disgust would reach was unclear. The turmoil had left China in complete disarray, with no President, Minister of Foreign Affairs, or Minister of Communications, and no sense of who might take their places. Pragmatic concerns dictated that the time had come to bypass China and Federal altogether, and negotiate a settlement directly with Japan.⁶¹

Even the new Secretary of State Frank Kellogg agreed with MacMurray on this point. Generally speaking, the two newly appointed officials quickly developed sharply different views on East Asia. MacMurray, a principal advisor to Kellogg's predecessor Charles Hughes, regarded the American relationship with Japan as the most vital to American interests in Asia. Kellogg, however, proved more sympathetic to the concerns of Chinese nationalism. To this end, Kellogg had made a unilateral decision, outside the Washington System's cooperative framework, to open negotiations with China over the revision of the unequal treaties. Kellogg, a former senator from Minnesota, sensed that most Americans sympathized with China over Japan. This decision infuriated MacMurray, who contended that Kellogg's policies, frustratingly supported by Nelson Johnson, were going to alienate the Japanese and drive them ever further toward militarism (a charge that overlooked Japan's own unilateral deviations from the Washington System since 1922). But both men agreed on cutting Federal loose. For Kellogg, it removed a source of antagonism with the Chinese nationalists, and for MacMurray, it resolved an issue that was alienating the Japanese.⁶²



Figure 1.7 Frank B. Kellogg (l.) and Charles Hughes, 1925 (National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

Federal's options had run out. Having refused to make any concessions to Chinese nationalism under more favorable circumstances in 1923, the company now found itself completely abandoned by American policymakers and RCA in 1926. Meanwhile, as the China project languished, Federal Telegraph itself had become embroiled in a leadership controversy that saw Schwerin ousted from California Federal in 1924 but remain in charge at Delaware Federal. That arrangement greatly complicated the ability of the two companies to cooperate on the China project, with California Federal's new leadership vehemently opposed to the continuing pursuit of that ill-fated endeavor. Furthermore, advancements in shortwave technology made it impractical to stick with a contract that mandated the use of Federal's now archaic transmission technologies, which cost twenty times more than a state-of-the-art shortwave transmitter.⁶³ With nothing left to lose, RCA dissociated itself from Federal and explored a settlement with Mitsui.

If Federal's fate was not already sealed, a political revolution in China certainly cemented it. In 1926, the Nationalist (or Guomindang) Party

and its army under the command of Chiang Kai-shek launched its "Northern Expedition" from their stronghold in Guangzhou. No mere warlord, Chiang presented himself as the successor of the most famous and revered nationalist, the late Sun Yat-sen, who had died of cancer in 1924. Chiang succeeded in reunifying China by 1928. He did so, however, by leaving intact many remnant warlord forces (which at least nominally recognized Chiang's leadership), and then turning to defeat those who remained recalcitrant.⁶⁴ The new government immediately signaled its intention to cancel all the controversial radio contracts. Chiang's regime would instead pursue new agreements that definitively brought China's international radio traffic under Chinese control.

In 1928, a near-delusional Schwerin unsuccessfully tried to persuade Harbord that better days for Federal were still ahead. RCA president James Harbord would hear nothing of it and ended the partnership. "[T]he Radio Corporation of America," Harbord wrote, "is not willing to advance any more money or to authorize any expenditure for any further negotiations in China" on behalf of the Federal contracts. "[T]he Chinese were determined to own and operate their own radio stations," Harbord judged. He saw "little likelihood of any international arrangement being made contrary to China's fixed determination."⁶⁵ RCA, in fact, had already plotted a new strategy to enter the China market without Federal. And so, after eight years of fruitless struggle, Federal Telegraph's once-heralded Chinese radiotelegraphy project came to this inglorious end.

* * *

In 1929, the Nationalists formally abrogated Federal's contract.⁶⁶ One historian of American radio whose work touched on Federal Telegraph's travails in 1920s China blamed it on "the convoluted obstructionism of the Chinese authorities."⁶⁷ The story, however, is more complicated than that. During the 1920s, Federal encountered the shifting terrain of China's political instability, Japanese expansion, and – in particular – newly assertive Chinese nationalism. The Federal Telegraph controversy demonstrated that for all its problems, China did not react passively to the "Great Power" politics that impinged upon the country. Comparable to earlier strategies that challenged the foreign introduction of the railroad and telegraph into China, the admittedly weak Chinese instead sought to influence the course of events by utilizing whatever the options and alternatives were available. Seizing on the politics of Chinese nationalism was one effective tool used to keep Federal at bay.⁶⁸

Federal Telegraph and its government backers never seriously grappled with Chinese nationalistic concerns. The key players in this drama, including Rennie Schwerin and John MacMurray, never grasped the Chinese perspective that motivated the actions of Chinese officials like Shi Zhaoji. Schwerin, for example, typically suspected the Japanese of working behind the scenes to foil the American company's rights. Such undiscerning attitudes directly impinged on the American negotiations with China and muted any chances there were of reaching a mutually acceptable solution to the radio controversy.

This is not to diminish the Japanese role in undermining Federal's project. The Japanese actively worked with to align favored Chinese authorities with Mitsui, most notably the Fengtian faction. In the climate of the 1920s, obstructing Federal was good politics and quite easy to accomplish for officials already disposed to help Mitsui. Chinese authorities sympathetic to Federal faced the greater challenge. To proceed with Federal, officials like Shi Zhaoji needed to secure concessions to Chinese nationalist concerns, which Robert Schwerin and his US government backers dismissed. In this regard, the Americans actually (and ironically) helped Mitsui by alienating the Chinese authorities most likely to support Federal's project in China.

Federal's ill-fated encounter with Chinese nationalism also intersected with the rise and fall of the Washington System. Historians such as Akira Iriye and Arthur Waldron link rising Chinese nationalism to the demise of the Washington System. Faced with intensifying Chinese nationalism demanding a rollback of imperialism, the Washington System powers increasingly acted unilaterally and outside the Washington framework to protect their respective interests in China. In this view, that unilateralism and the resulting demise of the Washington System helped place the United States and Japan on a road toward war during the 1930s.⁶⁹ To a diplomatic veteran like John MacMurray, Secretary of State Frank Kellogg's eagerness to placate Chinese nationalism and ignorance of China's obligations to Japan symbolized this larger problem. In the 1930s, it should be noted, MacMurray was particularly critical of Kellogg, bluntly (and over-simplistically) blaming Japanese militarism partly on Kellogg's shortsighted, pro-China policy.⁷⁰

The Federal debacle adds another layer to this interpretation. Pushing the Federal project during the 1920s alienated *both* Chinese and Japanese opinion. As such, Federal contributed additional strains to the Chinese-Japanese-American relationship at the very time the Washington System began unraveling. John MacMurray, a chief proponent of explicitly shaping American policies toward cooperation with Japan, began the

decade as the State Department's chief of Far Eastern affairs advocating firm US support of Federal. Through his steadfast support of Federal until 1925, MacMurray himself antagonized Japanese concerns about their interests in northeast China, concerns that eventually fueled Japanese militarism. In this context, was long-term Japanese-American cooperation that MacMurray idealized, often seen as the main casualty of the Washington System's demise, actually a realistic possibility?

Ultimately, the Federal Telegraph Company squandered its opportunity in 1920s China. Rennie Schwerin and his US government allies relied on dated assumptions about China and consistently underestimated the power and legitimacy of Chinese nationalism. They refused to consider how concessions to China might have ultimately helped Federal execute its contractual rights. Unable to see the Chinese negotiating stance as anything but a mask for Japanese interests, Federal stubbornly refused to make any substantive concessions that might have allowed its project to go forward. In the process, Rennie Schwerin made the contract dispute a Manichean struggle between Federal and Japan. Furthermore, the Federal President failed to recognize that Federal's partner RCA could not countenance volatile public statements about Japan, which put RCA's lucrative Japanese interests at risk.

The apparent irony is that by refusing to concede anything, Federal Telegraph and Schwerin ended up losing everything. Visions of Sino-American harmony furthered through radiotelegraphy collapsed amidst an array of American, Chinese, and Japanese antagonisms that not only undermined Federal, but also tore at the very fabric of American-East Asian relations. Federal Telegraph did not improve American-East Asian relations, but instead magnified the divisions within both Sino-American and Japanese-American relations. Meanwhile, RCA's decision to end the Federal partnership killed the Delaware company, while the stockholders of the original California Federal ousted Schwerin from their board. Rennie Schwerin and his Federal Telegraph Company arrived in China in 1921 with the backing of one of the world's most powerful governments soon to be joined by one of the world's most powerful radio corporations. It was not enough to surmount the complications confronted in the increasingly complicated and nationalistic political context that defined 1920s China.

2

“We Are Not Interested in the Politics of the Situation”: The Radio Corporation of America in Nationalist China, 1928–37

RCA quickly put the Federal debacle behind it. The company agreed to two radio contracts with China's new Nationalist regime in 1928, and had two new stations operational in China by the early 1930s. The optimism surrounding the potential for Sino-American radiotelegraphy returned in full force. When RCA opened the first of those radio links between China and the United States in 1930, company president James Harbord predicted that the new Sino-American radio connections “will be a factor in bringing China and the United States into a closer relationship.”¹ Convinced that a stagnant China had been historically disconnected from the ongoing global march of progress, RCA Vice President William Winterbottom metaphorically claimed that radio made a “breach in the Great Wall of China's isolation.” “This direct service,” Winterbottom continued, “gives China an independent communication system operated by the Chinese Government to aid in developing foreign markets and increasing her trade and commerce.”²

As had been the case with Federal, bitter conflict soon swallowed those utopian-minded predictions. Unlike Federal, RCA confronted a far more effective Chinese regime determined to exercise greater control over China's international radio communications. When RCA refused to abandon its business in Manchuria following the 1931 Japanese invasion, the Nationalist regime struck back hard. In retaliation, the government turned to RCA's global rival, International Telephone and Telegraph Company (ITT) to squeeze RCA out of the more lucrative



Figure 2.1 Chiang Kai-Shek, 1945 (Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

Shanghai market. By 1935, RCA's protest of the ITT contract's legality reached the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, allowing the Chinese government to earn additional political capital at home for its vigorous defense of Chinese radio interests abroad.

The unfolding of these events provides a textbook case of "transnational structuring."³ This concept explores the interactions between states, officials, and multinational corporate actors as each side uses the

other to gain advantage in distinct and discrete contests for power and influence. On the Chinese side, both Chiang Kai-shek and his rivals within the Nationalist government manipulated the rivalry of RCA and ITT to gain symbolic capital and political advantage over one another in their domestic political battles. At the same time, RCA and ITT used the internal rivalries of the Chinese state and its external struggles with Japan to try and expand their respective shares of the global telecommunications market. The Japanese, meanwhile, used internationally respected RCA's willingness to do business in Manchuria to try and secure some degree of international legitimacy for Japan's widely condemned takeover of that Chinese territory. Throughout these overlapping struggles, Chinese government and American corporate actors often appealed to malleable ideas of what constituted Chinese or American national interests to justify and legitimate more parochial-minded courses of action.

The key to identifying transnational structuring is recognizing the long-term historically significant (and often unintended) consequences of these multifaceted contests surrounding Chinese state formation and the global telecommunications market. In this case, RCA's initial contract resulted from Nationalist efforts to consolidate control over China and its radio communications. The ITT contract, however, resulted from Chiang Kai-shek's rivals within the Communications Ministry trying to undermine the pro-RCA Chiang faction after RCA committed itself to working with Japan in Manchuria. New avenues of Sino-American communications opened across the Pacific as a result of these power struggles, while authority within the Nationalist regime was sharply contested and ultimately redefined.

In the end, Chiang Kai-shek prevailed over his rivals. Nonetheless, his government remained committed to defending ITT against the now-unpopular RCA for pragmatic political purposes. A victory over RCA at The Hague promised to confirm the Chinese state's overall authority and the particular authority of the Ministry of Communications over China's international communications. The ITT contract's origins as a means to challenge Chiang's authority within the government mattered little once Chiang and his cohort realized they could use the contract to their own advantage. Ultimately, RCA's travails in 1930s China unleashed forces that impacted the process of Chinese state formation and the broader transnational communications networks that surrounded it. Meanwhile, for RCA, the company's future willingness to remain a force on global radiotelegraphy hung in the balance as its executives awaited the decision from The Hague.

Nationalism, Imperialism, and RCA in China

In 1929, China's National Reconstruction Commission, led by Chiang Kai-shek's confidant Zhang Jingjiang, approached RCA about doing business in China. It was a logical choice. RCA was the most powerful and technologically advanced radio communications company in the United States. It had long been interested in the Sino-American radiotelegraphy market. Moreover, the ill-fated Federal agreement no longer restrained RCA. The collapse of the RCA-Federal partnership also freed RCA to use its "alternator" radio technology, considered superior to the older "arc" technology that Federal had been determined to use as per the terms of its original contract.⁴

Unbeknownst to China, in 1929 RCA's future in the global telecommunications business was uncertain. RCA Vice President David Sarnoff was pressuring RCA President James Harbord and Chairman of the Board Owen Young to focus RCA's resources on the burgeoning American domestic broadcasting market. The problem, in Sarnoff's eyes, was that RCA's international communications business generated only \$4.8 million of RCA's \$65 million gross revenues. For that reason, Sarnoff advocated spinning off business RCA's international communications business into a subsidiary that could be sold. ITT, which was hoping to expand from its base business in international cable telegraphy into global radiotelegraphy, had expressed interest in acquiring RCA's communications interests. For that reason, in 1929 RCA reorganized its international communications business into an independently operated subsidiary, RCA Communications. An initiative into China was consistent with Sarnoff's proposed reorientation, since it would add value to RCA's international communications interests at precisely the time RCA contemplated selling it to ITT. Sarnoff certainly did not hold high hopes that a China contract could have any long-term economic value to RCA itself. "The Chinese government has a very flexible conscience so far as its positions are concerned in ... granting concessions or destroying concessions," Sarnoff testified at a 1929 Congressional hearing. "I do not pay much attention to the different positions taken by the changing Chinese governments." Sarnoff concluded.⁵

As Sarnoff's comments suggest, the challenge facing any RCA move into China was the lingering uncertainties of China's political picture in the late 1920s. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists confronted a broken country when they came to power in 1927. Leading the so-called "Northern Expedition" to unify China, Chiang secured his position with bona fide nationalist credentials, which bolstered his legitimacy



Figure 2.2 David Sarnoff, 1940 (Harris and Ewing Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

throughout China. The late Sun Yat-sen, a pivotal and popular figure in the revolution that had toppled China's last dynasty in the 1911 revolution, had founded the Nationalists. Chiang Kai-shek, despite holding more conservative and authoritarian political leanings, was Sun's protégé and acknowledged successor as the Nationalist Party's leader. Viewed through the prism of Sun's career, the Northern Expedition's apparently successful conclusion symbolized the posthumous culmination of Sun's political goals for China, and Chiang benefited from the

affiliation with his late mentor. Less obvious to the public eye were the compromises Chiang made with warlord rivals to become China's nominal leader, compromises that often left these rivals in control of their troops and claiming independent power bases within the new regime. Handled properly, Chiang's own claim to popular nationalist support could help check potential challenges to his position from within his new patchwork government. Hoping to curb imperialism, win the loyalty of China's large population, and solidify control over the country, the authoritarian Nationalists embarked on a state-building project for the next ten years. They emphasized a strong national government that would increase China's strength by reclaiming its sovereignty and pursuing centrally directed economic modernization policies. Ideally, the successful implementation of these strategies promised to be consistent with the new regime's authoritarian leanings and desire for centralized control, while also eliminating warlord powerbases and satisfying the nationalism that helped propel the Nationalists to power.⁶

Radiotelegraphy occupied a prominent place in the larger Nationalist state-building strategies. Domestic radiotelegraphy's appeal as a potential tool to further the unification of the still-divided country bolstered its importance. A national network of radio communications interconnected with international radiotelegraphy networks could also serve as a vehicle to facilitate economic development in impoverished China. Equally significant was the new regime's determination not to allow radiotelegraphy and the vagaries surrounding authority over it to provide cover for furthering foreign imperialism, as had been the case earlier in the decade. Zhu Jiahua, a prominent Nationalist official who became the Minister of Communications in 1933, recalled that soon after the Nationalist government came to power in 1927, it "decided to build up its own system of international radio communication to assert its sovereign rights which were infringed upon by [foreigners]."⁷ Consequently, it was essential to start anew by clearing the decks of all the controversial contracts that had fueled the machinations of companies such as Federal and Mitsui. "The Nationalists have never recognized such agreements... [nor] will the Nationalists' government be bound by any of the agreements," the new regime's Vice Commissioner of Foreign Affairs Guo Taiqi declared in 1928.⁸ For these reasons, the Nationalists prioritized establishing a strong central authority over radio. After initially placing that jurisdiction in the hands of the National Reconstruction Commission, China's 1929 Telecommunications Act shifted full authority over radio to the Ministry of Communications. Underscoring the

determination to avoid a repeat of the Federal-Mitsui controversy, the 1929 law explicitly prohibited the granting of radio monopolies.⁹

The results were impressive. During the first half of 1930s, China reached agreements and purchased equipment for radiotelegraphy links to London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Rome, Geneva, Tokyo, Saigon, Hanoi, Manila, Hong Kong, Batavia, and Macao. The Communications Ministry's vastly improved management of finances facilitated the purchase of the requisite equipment and the acquisition of the necessary land in Shanghai on which to build the stations. Between 1931 and 1936, China's domestic radiotelegraphy network expanded from thirty-two to sixty-five stations. Throughout this period government revenues from radiotelegraphy increased substantially (see Tables 2.1–2.3).¹⁰

Table 2.1 Monthly revenue from International Telegrams during 1933 and 1934

Month	Cable revenue (\$)	Radio revenue (\$)	Percent of revenue from cable	Percent of revenue from radio
January 1933	638,412.11	259,633.74	71.09	28.91
February 1933	648,030.17	236,022.17	73.30	26.70
March 1933	779,865.95	265,839.07	74.58	25.42
April 1933	607,055.79	252,794.59	70.60	29.40
May 1933	767,701.18	379,726.13	66.90	33.10
June 1933	643,796.96	344,030.79	65.17	34.83
July 1933	601,847.62	288,310.43	67.61	32.39
August 1933	551,764.63	280,234.30	66.32	33.68
September 1933	551,758.22	290,343.59	65.52	34.48
October 1933	547,197.56	294,531.91	65.01	34.09
November 1933	569,347.59	343,651.10	62.36	37.64
December 1933	557,193.66	344,783.00	61.77	38.23
January 1934	567,312.50	351,306.00	61.76	38.24
February 1934	479,661.10	306,975.74	60.98	39.02
March 1934	533,673.12	350,539.06	59.75	40.25
April 1934	498,173.20	337,396.81	59.62	40.38
May 1934	491,853.10	344,966.19	58.78	41.22
June 1934	465,150.85	412,147.86	53.02	46.98

Source: Chu Chia-hua [Zhu Jiahua], *China's Postal and Other Communications Services* (London, 1937), 162.

Table 2.2 International cable and radio messages sent from China

Year	Cable messages (\$)	Radio messages (\$)	Total messages (\$)
1929	1,074,813	0	1,074,813
1930	1,180,586	0	1,180,586
1931	1,413,226	158,665	1,571,891
1932	1,227,334	192,450	1,419,784
1933	1,326,395	472,876	1,799,271
1934	1,178,998	607,277	1,786,265
1935	1,043,228	684,620	1,727,848
1936	773,759	699,967	1,474,716

Source: Wen Yu-ching, "Electrical Communications," in *Chinese Year Book*, 3rd issue (1936/37), 985; Chu Chia-hua [Zhu Jiahua], *China's Postal and Other Communication Services* (London, 1937), 160.

Table 2.3 Chinese government radio service revenues and expenditures

Year	Revenues (\$)	Expenditures (\$)	Balance (\$)
1928	—	—	—
1929	662,106	554,752	+ 107,354
1930	1,658,531	1,580,032	+ 78,499
1931	3,509,635	1,541,079	+ 1,968,556
1932	4,001,685	1,824,496	+ 2,177,189
1933	4,723,870	1,896,080	+ 2,827,790
1934	5,169,878	2,791,179	+ 2,378,699

Source: Chu Chia-hua [Zhu Jiahua], *China's Postal and Other Communications Services* (London, 1937), 197.

Moreover, by the end of 1928, the Japanese inadvertently helped Chiang Kai-shek by eliminating Chiang's most significant rival for national power, the Manchurian-based warlord regime of Zhang Zuolin. That same year RCA had, in fact, negotiated an agreement directly with Zhang to build a station in Manchuria's capital city of Mukden. To be sure this agreement troubled National Reconstruction Commission head Zhang Jingjiang when he first approached RCA about signing an agreement with the Nationalists. He sought assurances from RCA that it would recognize the authority of the new national regime over radio without exception. Still wary from the Federal experience, RCA had reason to wonder just what type of partner the Nationalists would be and



Figure 2.3 Zhang Zuolin, date unknown (George Grantham Bain Collection, Bain News Service, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

whether it was worth getting involved with the still shaky regime that had still not confirmed its authority over the entire country.¹¹

A stunning display of Japanese ineptitude, however, removed the most significant obstacles to forming an RCA-Nationalist partnership. The trigger was the June 1928 assassination of Zhang Zuolin by officers of Japan's Guandong Army. Japan's Guandong Army had been stationed in Manchuria since the end of the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese War. This presence was ostensibly to protect Japan's ever-expanding economic stake in the region, particularly railroad and shipping interests. Zhang had essentially

functioned as a Guandong puppet, which tarnished his nationalist credentials at a time when the tide of Chinese nationalism was irresistibly rising. Zhang's efforts to disentangle himself from his Guandong patrons (such as by inviting RCA to do business in Manchuria's capital city) sparked the murder. The zealous Guandong officers who perpetrated the act clumsily tried to blame the killing on Chinese radicals. At this point, the ruling Seiyukai party's close ties to the Guandong Army became an electoral liability. When Tokyo appeared to condone this shocking display of international lawlessness by refusing to punish the perpetrators, the Japanese electorate rebuked the ruling Seiyukai party in the 1928 elections by voting into power the opposition Minseito. Meanwhile, infuriated by his father's assassination, Zhang Zuolin's son and successor, Zhang Xueliang, promptly cast his lot with Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist agenda. It was a clear signal the younger Zhang had no intention of being a Japanese puppet like his father had been. Chiang, in turn, tacitly acknowledged the "Young Marshall's" political control of northeast China. Under this arrangement, Manchuria's Northeastern Radio and Long Distance Telegraph Administration, the bureaucracy that negotiated RCA's Mukden contract, retained its autonomy (although the 1929 Telecommunications Act subsequently provided for loose ties between that bureaucracy and Nanjing's Ministry of Communications). In the context of these moves, the Nationalist regime recognized the validity of RCA's Manchuria contract. Securely in the Nationalists' good graces, RCA negotiated a second contract in November 1928 to establish a Shanghai-San Francisco circuit.¹² Finally, the Minseito government in Tokyo, which had campaigned on platform of pursuing friendlier ties to the West and China and lacked the Seiyukai's intimate ties to Mitsui, refused to protest the developments. Consequently, the execution of both projects was swift: the Shanghai-San Francisco circuit went online in December 1930, while the Mukden link followed in June 1931. The speed with which the Chinese built the Shanghai and Mukden stations is indicative of just how serious China's new regime was about building the country's telecommunications infrastructure and overcoming the stalemate of the previous decade.¹³

From 1928 to 1931, three major actors influenced the development of Sino-American radiotelegraphy: the Nationalist regime, RCA, and Japan's Guandong Army. The latter was in a sense the joker of this story. By assassinating Zhang, the Japanese militarists actually set in motion events that temporarily disabled them – first, by facilitating the downfall of the supportive Seiyukai party, and second, by driving Manchuria into the hands of Chiang Kai-shek. Both the Nationalists

and RCA benefited from these unexpected developments. For China, they brought Manchuria, along with the last of the independently negotiated radio contracts, under the central government's nominal authority. For RCA, these developments cleared the way to pursue the Sino-American radiotelegraphy business absent the political obstacles that had proved so debilitating earlier in the 1920s, and did so in a way that could add value to the international communications business it hoped to sell to ITT. Prospects looked bright in the summer of 1931. That promising situation, however, changed dramatically before summer could turn to autumn.

Sino-American radiotelegraphy and the Manchurian Incident

On September 19, 1931, Japan's Guandong Army launched a full invasion and takeover of Manchuria. In an effort to mask Japanese control, it established a "puppet state" called "Manchukuo" in early 1932, and named the last emperor of China's fallen Qing (Manchu) dynasty (1644–1912) as the figurehead ruler over what was the ancestral homeland of China's last imperial family. The most immediate provocation came from Zhang Xueliang, who by 1931 emerged as a threat to long-term Japanese economic interests in Manchuria, building railroads and port facilities for the expressed purpose of competing with existing Japanese interests. The Minseito-led Japanese government, blamed for onset of the Depression in Japan, had fallen out of favor and was powerless to stop the military from moving against Zhang. Sensing rising popular support for the Seiyukai position that Manchuria needed to be severed from Chinese control to help restore Japanese prosperity, the Guandong Army struck. The Japanese electorate signaled their approval of the Guandong Army's move against Manchuria by returning the Seiyukai to power with an overwhelming victory in the February 1932 elections.¹⁴

Japanese forces bombed and then seized RCA's Mukden radio station during the invasion. The disruption, however, was temporary. By March 1932, the Japanese had completed repairs on the bombed station and inquired through the Manchukuo government if RCA wanted to resume operations under the terms of its original contract.¹⁵ If RCA agreed, the Japanese would secure the cooperation of an internationally respected enterprise, which could bestow a degree of legitimacy upon Manchukuo amidst the global condemnation that Japan faced.

RCA, meanwhile, was having second thoughts about abandoning the international telecommunications business. The proposed sale to ITT had run afoul of US anti-trust laws, and the anti-corporate political environment that surrounded the Great Depression was not conducive to securing an exemption from Congress. Moreover, RCA Communications had weathered the economic downturn well. With new investment costs low and labor costs remaining static, RCA Communications remained profitable through 1931, even as sales in other RCA divisions suffered. Alongside RCA's robust domestic entertainment broadcasting subsidiary, the National Broadcasting Company, RCA's top executives expected the company to thrive into the 1930s.¹⁶

The events in Manchuria greatly complicated RCA's calculations. To accept Manchukuo's solicitation and contribute, however marginally, to the functioning of this questionable regime promised to infuriate the Chinese government. Chiang's regime hoped to force a Japanese retreat from Manchuria through concerted international pressure. However, as a transnational company, RCA also had to consider the Mukden situation with specific regard to its larger relationship with Japan. The company operated a successful subsidiary in the country, the Victor Talking Machine Company of Japan, and had begun broadcasting exchanges earlier in 1931. Perhaps more importantly, RCA's radio-telegraphy link to Japan had been one of the company's most profitable circuits in the world. However, that circuit was also especially vulnerable since the Japanese government could cancel the contract without penalty should the Japanese ever decide to open a competing circuit. RCA therefore had significant incentive to be exceedingly cooperative toward Japan.¹⁷

The impossible challenge of trying to balance RCA's Chinese and Japanese interests fell to the company's representative in China, George Shecklen. "I know the situation in Mukden is a delicate one," he observed, "and perhaps it would be better if I could keep out of it." Shecklen understood that RCA could not "expect to change China overnight into a U.S.A." and that it should consider the Chinese perspective. RCA representatives doing business in China would be well served "to remember his 'When in Rome' stuff," Shecklen advised. Shecklen's understanding of that perspective left no doubt how the Chinese would react if RCA returned to Mukden. "Naturally, this rubs China the wrong way, and they have indicated in no uncertain terms that they do not consider it a friendly act, on the part of anyone, to deal with the 'Manchowkuo' [sic]." Still, Shecklen insisted that "great care must be exercised not to jeopardize [the Mukden circuit's] future."¹⁸

The options were not appealing. "[W]e may have to choose," Shecklen concluded, "whether we want 'Mukden' or 'Shanghai' for our China terminal." That meant choosing between China and Japan. For RCA's long-term interests, Shecklen looked to China. "I believe China's future, regardless of its present will make it of greatest importance to us and perhaps some day of even greater importance than Japan." More immediate concerns, however, dictated cooperation with Japan. Therefore, Shecklen advised that any re-opening of the Mukden circuit be accompanied by assurances to the Chinese government that RCA's actions did not constitute recognition of Manchukuo's legitimacy. "Perhaps, I cannot see the whole picture but I hope our China service, as bad as it may seem now, will not suffer from any action taken with regard to Mukden."¹⁹

Shecklen's advice, naïve as it may have been, was well received at RCA's New York headquarters. The company's Vice President William Winterbottom informed Shecklen that RCA did indeed support the resumption of Mukden-San Francisco communications under the terms of the original agreement, which Winterbottom noted was actually signed months before the Nationalists made their peace with Zhang Xueliang. Winterbottom insisted this step was necessary to protect the company's investment in the uncertain present and would otherwise be part of a future-oriented wait-and-see strategy. Winterbottom did not want the admittedly low level of economic development in Mukden, especially when compared to bustling Shanghai, to cloud the long view of Mukden's future. "Many of our circuits which we have opened...to different parts of the world," Winterbottom commented a few years later, "[are] not at this time heavily occupied with traffic [and] were designed for the future."²⁰ With only five to ten messages crossing the Pacific daily, RCA instructed the San Francisco station to resume operations under the terms of old agreement and "not to develop this circuit to any larger extent until the situation cleared itself." Under no circumstances was RCA to negotiate any new agreements with the Manchurian authorities. "We must take the position that we are not interested in the politics of the situation," Winterbottom concluded, "for it may take years before the League of Nations, or any other body, will be able to settle the Manchowkuo [sic] situation, and communication should not have to wait upon these lengthy deliberations."²¹ RCA thereby reopened the Mukden station in April 1932 on the basis of the original 1928 contract.²²

Despite Winterbottom's caution, the resumption of Mukden-San Francisco communications inevitably became politicized. China's

Ministry of Communications fired off a sharply worded rebuke to Shecklen and insisted that RCA break off any relationship with the "False Nation" at once. Yan Renguang, the Director of the Communication Ministry's Bureau of International Telegraphs, bluntly warned that Mukden's re-opening would be "very inadvisable and would very likely lead to future complications."²³ China's central concern, Shecklen admitted, was that RCA's return to Manchuria "would lend prestige to the newly formed government which would be distasteful to the Chinese government."²⁴ Intentionally or not, RCA's move blatantly contradicted the Chinese government's goal of keeping Japanese-controlled Manchuria isolated. The goodwill RCA had previously accrued from the Nationalists dissipated.

Still, the Chinese authorities had few options to force RCA's hand. American diplomats rebuffed China's efforts to secure an official repudiation of RCA's actions. Chinese overtures to US officials in both Washington and Nanjing garnered little sympathy. Nelson Johnson, head of the State Department's Far Eastern Affairs division, emphasized that "the American government had no authority by which to prevent action of this type by an American company."²⁵

The American reluctance to pressure RCA should not be interpreted as implicit support of the company's actions. Indeed, the State Department opposed a stipulation in the RCA's contract that appeared to exclude other American companies from Sino-American radiotelegraphy.²⁶ That aversion, however, did not translate into restraining RCA. The State Department's unwillingness to act against RCA, despite its problems with the company's China arrangements, reflected the broader problems China faced in building international support to dislodge Japan from Manchuria. Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang decided to withdraw from Manchuria without a fight. They concluded that the young and divided regime could not prevail, nor could they risk the potential costlier consequences of a certain military defeat. Although realistic in conception, the retreat nonetheless dampened international respect for China's case.²⁷ Moreover, amidst the ongoing global depression, the Western powers prioritized addressing their own domestic problems. Neither the Americans nor the League of Nations offered China any substantive measures to oust Japan from Manchuria. RCA captured the prevailing mood when it insisted it "cannot be held responsible for the consequences of China running away from her end of the circuit."²⁸

Furthermore, Japan's rapid industrial development since the late nineteenth century had garnered a degree of international respect, despite concerns over Japanese methods. Many American officials believed that

Japan was in a better position than troubled China to develop resource-rich Manchuria. President Herbert Hoover's attitude toward China, influenced by his dramatic experiences in China during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion, was typical. Hoover believed the Chinese suffered from a "mental lack of mechanical instinct," although he conceded they possessed "good humor and natural gaiety when well fed." During the current crisis, Hoover was not inclined to vigorously oppose Japanese domination of Manchuria or to single out RCA's activities in Mukden for any kind of reproach.²⁹

The Manchurian Incident proved to be a pivotal moment in Sino-American radiotelegraphy. The Japanese takeover of Manchuria clearly signaled a new and more aggressive approach to China, spearheaded by the Guandong Army. However, RCA, unlike Federal before it, was not treated as a foreign economic interloper in Manchuria. The Japanese instead embraced RCA as partner, whose continuing management of the San Francisco-Mukden circuit could help legitimate Manchukuo's independence. For its part, RCA responded favorably to Manchukuo's entreaties to preserve its broader rapport with Japan. RCA understood this position risked provoking the ire of the Nationalist regime. However, RCA executives believed they should not be held responsible for that government's own shortcomings in dealing with Japan. Moreover, if the Nationalists could not stop Japanese aggression, what could that government possibly do to punish RCA?

In the aftermath of the Manchurian Incident, Nationalist strategies appear vulnerable to second-guessing. Surface appearances of futility, however, did not mean the Chinese were out of options to restrain RCA. In fact, the Nationalists had to look no further than ITT, the company that nearly acquired RCA Communications a few years earlier, to find an edge against RCA. And in short order it would be RCA, not the Nationalists, whose strategies were called into question.

RCA vs. ITT and China's national interest

Once RCA resumed communications with the Mukden station in April 1932, the Nationalists wasted no time in retaliating. In June 1932, the Communications Ministry signed an agreement with RCA rival Mackay Radio and Telegraph Company of California to open a competing Shanghai-San Francisco circuit. Mackay, a recently acquired ITT subsidiary, inaugurated its rival Shanghai-San Francisco circuit in May 1933, establishing yet another front in a widening RCA-ITT global battle over the international communications market.³⁰

RCA believed the Mackay agreement violated the terms of its earlier contract with China. The RCA agreement obliged the Chinese government to "transmit every message within its control destined to the United States of America or intended for transit through the United States [to RCA's San Francisco station] unless otherwise routed by the sender." Another clause, however, did permit China to sign agreements with "any other nation or nations." RCA rejected the premise that the Mackay agreement was justified under the terms of this latter clause. Moreover, with RCA's China agreement stipulating that "each party hereto shall cooperate with the other to secure the successful and remunerative working of the jointly operated circuit of circuits," RCA argued that China's signing of the rival Mackay agreement undoubtedly violated RCA's rights.³¹

Mackay's China initiative was part of a broader ITT challenge to RCA's global position that followed the collapse of the merger plans. In 1932 and 1933, RCA posted its first financial losses of the Depression. Sensing that its rival was wounded, ITT aggressively negotiated agreements with foreign countries to establish radio circuits that ran parallel to RCA's connections on more favorable terms. Indeed, concurrent to its China difficulties, RCA also confronted Mackay challenges to its communications links with Poland, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Italy, France, Czechoslovakia, and even Japan.³²

ITT had already approached Japan with an offer for a new contract containing a more favorable distribution of revenue. The offer could very well compel Japan to invoke the cancellation clause in RCA's Japan contract. RCA's cooperative approach to the Mukden-San Francisco connection must be viewed in this light: an effort to dissuade Japan from pursuing the ITT proposal and halt its rival's expansion into East Asia. Viewed through this larger prism, ITT's appearance on RCA's China flank was deeply unsettling.³³

Mackay's 1932 contract was merely the latest front in a long brewing RCA-ITT rivalry over China. Even before the Manchurian Incident, China's Ministry of Communications had been pressuring RCA to revise its revenue sharing formula to bring it in line with ITT's more favorable distributions being used elsewhere in the world. In 1930, ITT representatives approached Chinese officials trying to obstruct the construction of what became RCA's Shanghai station. When that initiative failed, one RCA memo recounted that "the Pacific cable rate [was] lowered by the ITT interests some weeks after our [RCA-ITT merger] negotiations had terminated." RCA estimated that this move cost it approximately \$160,000 a year in revenues from cross-Pacific traffic.³⁴

Mackay's 1932 China contract further fueled that rivalry. Following the signing of that agreement, George Shecklen discovered that Mackay had lobbied Shanghai banks and financial houses to change their telegraphy service to the new Mackay line, and even provided them with message blanks to route communications via Mackay. To compel these enterprises to drop RCA, Shecklen lamented, Mackay representatives were "using as pressure the business they have given these banks and financial houses." The Shanghai and Hong Kong Bank's telegraphic department manager confirmed that he had been ordered by his superiors to route some traffic to the Mackay line.³⁵

For RCA, the situation was quickly spinning out of control. "If the traffic both ways over the [Shanghai]-RCA circuit diminishes markedly, RCA may be forced to withdraw from the field altogether," Shecklen warned in an op-ed piece cowritten with the US District Attorney at Shanghai.³⁶ In New York, RCA executives viewed the events in China through the prism of the broader ITT global challenge. Expressing concern that persistent ITT competition could "show signs of making real inroads in our setup," RCA Vice President William A. Winterbottom urged RCA president David Sarnoff to consider a cutthroat economic strategy to drive ITT into the ground. ITT's obvious effort to "break down the position of RCA" was a boon to foreign governments, which simply waited to see which "American company...offers the largest share of revenue" before signing a contract. "[T]his is a perfect example of how two American companies are now thinking of how they can best make love to foreign administrations."³⁷

In light of RCA's Mukden activities, however, the Chinese government was not about to invite that American radio company back into its bed. Credit should go to ITT for its skillful manipulation of the situation. ITT's foreign strategies had "always been ready and quick to adjust American practices to local conditions and to adopt such local practices as were conducive to the successful development of the various entities," trumpeted the corporation's 1927 Annual Report.³⁸ George Shecklen acknowledged this strength in the context of the current dispute. "In their varied interests in China, Japan, and elsewhere, they [ITT] have gathered around them influential, native, commercial and political personages," Shecklen explained. "Their local men are citizens or subjects of the country and are not only commercially influential but politically powerful as well."³⁹

RCA was trapped. It denied that its activities in Manchuria constituted any recognition of the new regime. The company, however, was powerless to prevent the Japanese press from portraying RCA's behavior

as signifying quasi-recognition of Manchuria. ITT representatives made sure to bring such claims to the attention of Chinese officials to further undermine RCA's position. Adding insult to injury, the ITT men played up RCA's problems with an ongoing anti-trust investigation in the United States, which focused on allegations that RCA sought an international communications monopoly. RCA's opposition to Mackay's China contract, ITT pointed out, lent credence to the charge.⁴⁰

A little detective work by RCA's George Shecklen further illuminated ITT's relentless push in China. In the autumn of 1932, he collected a list of no less than thirteen ITT officials who had registered at a Nanjing hotel in close proximity to the Ministry of Communications. "From the questions that the Chinese have asked us from time to time," Shecklen surmised, "[ITT] is endeavoring to show that we have no good standing with our own government, that we are weak financially and that we have endeavored to monopolize radio communications not only in the United States but all over the world."⁴¹

ITT's trump card in this drama was RCA's continuing Mukden operation. Chen Mingshu, the Minister of Communications who signed the Mackay contract, insisted that challenging RCA in Manchuria "would surely be of benefit to China." Huang Shaoxiong, who briefly served as the acting Communications Minister after Chen stepped down, observed that RCA disregarded "the non-recognition of the 'False Organization' by China as declared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since the Northeastern accident." Huang was livid that RCA continued "radio communication with the said false organization." In Huang's view, RCA provoked the Ministry of Communications to "fearlessly sign the [Mackay] agreement," which provided "some means to work against...RCA's action," while at the same time allowing China to "avoid RCA's monopoly."⁴²

As compelling Chen and Huang's argument may have seemed, definitions of the "national interest" are not objective truths, and can be manipulated for partisan gain. In this case, Chinese government actors had used RCA's presence in Manchuria to wage a struggle for control within the Nationalist state. The left-leaning Chen Mingshu had grown increasingly frustrated with Chiang Kai-shek's policies. In Chen's estimation, the government failed to relieve the suffering of common Chinese, concentrated unduly on suppressing radicalism, tolerated corruption, and – most importantly – refused to counter the Japanese threat. To try and placate the increasingly bitter Chen, Chiang moved Chen through a variety of important political and military posts. Coincidentally, Chen was serving as Communications Minister

when the Manchurian Incident erupted. When RCA announced its Mukden decision, an infuriated Chen accepted Mackay's contract offer in order to punish both RCA and the company's supporters in China's government. Following the consummation of the Mackay deal, Chen promptly resigned in order to more openly oppose Chiang. Through most of 1932, Chiang refused to accept Chen Mingshu's resignation as Minister of Communications in the hopes that Chen would change his mind. Instead, Chen openly broke with the regime by year's end, participating in the "Fujian Rebellion" that unsuccessfully sought to oust Chiang from power. Still, Chen's ill-fated power play against Chiang did not help RCA. The contract Chen signed with Mackay remained in effect, even though Chen himself had left the government.⁴³

RCA's China representative George Shecklen, who was concurrently serving as an advisor to the Communications Ministry, observed the divisions in the Nationalist camp first hand. "Our opening with Mukden was only an excuse for the 'bad boys,'" Shecklen remarked in reference to Chen's clique in the Ministry. "What is difficult to understand is how one so called reputable American concern [ITT] is allowed to plot with weak, ignorant, or crooked politicians of a foreign government for the repudiation or violation of honestly and fairly made and legally correct agreements of another American company [RCA]."⁴⁴ Shecklen was particularly galled by Chen's hypocrisy, as he saw it. "Why, above all, if RCA's Mukden traffic was punishable was the Ministry [of Communications] *itself* trafficking with [Japanese-controlled] Harbin and other stations [in Manchuria at] the present time?," Shecklen fumed in the piece he coauthored with the US District Attorney at Shanghai.⁴⁵

With the politically motivated manipulation of what entailed China's national interest working against RCA, the company responded with an initiative to define American "national interest" to its own benefit, and thereby secure the American government's support against ITT. As George Shecklen proclaimed, "I hope to lick this American competition of ours and I hope to finally get something on them so they can be licked at home."⁴⁶ To gain that advantage on what Shecklen privately admitted was RCA's "American competition," RCA publicly questioned ITT's allegiances to the US. "Whatever may be its ownership," RCA remarked in its response to a US government inquiry into its international practices, "I.T. & T. is very definitely an international company, rather than an American company." Pointing to the asymmetry between ITT's internationally derived revenues and its "infinitesimal" domestic ones, the brief charged that ITT's "aims, its ambitions are international." If RCA did not receive government support against

ITT machinations, the company claimed, ITT would inevitably secure a monopoly on the international radio traffic with America. Under this dire scenario, "the R.C.A. communications Company will not be able to survive." The American public and the American national interest, RCA warned, would be compromised "with radio communications in the hands of a company whose aspirations and interests are chiefly international."⁴⁷ These arguments, however, fell flat in the unfavorable anti-corporate political climate of depression-wracked America. The US Justice Department, the Federal Radio Commission (and its successor agency the Federal Communications Commission), and the US Congress remained determined to loosen RCA's stranglehold on the American radio business.⁴⁸

With US government support not forthcoming, RCA turned to potential allies in Chiang Kai-shek's circle, back in charge at the Ministry of Communications by the end of 1932. Perhaps RCA could minimize ITT's further penetration of China's communications market. "I have been working on the new Ministry officials to get them to act in such a way as to forestall the I.T. & T. from getting their fingers into the international and domestic radiotelephone field in China," Shecklen wrote to Winterbottom, accounting for his efforts since Chen's resignation.⁴⁹ However, the combination of RCA's presence in Mukden and ITT's more favorable distribution of revenue rendered RCA politically toxic. Japan's own efforts to champion RCA's plight by condemning "China's poor faith in international dealings" did not help RCA win any new friends in the Communications Ministry.⁵⁰ Ultimately, it made no political sense for China to distance itself from ITT in 1932 and Shecklen's efforts amounted to nothing.

Zhu Jiahua, who became Minister of Communications in 1933, sought to resolve the RCA-ITT mess. The Nationalists had, in fact, considered canceling Mackay. Zhu was sympathetic to RCA, although he had no intention of allowing his personal preferences compromise his Ministry's overall authority over radio. Zhu initially asked Mackay to voluntarily abandon its China contract in deference to RCA's older agreement. Predictably, Zhu noted, Mackay "refused to yield any of its contractual rights." That response presented Zhu with a dilemma. Both companies threatened to sue China in the event that China did not uphold their alleged contractual obligations. For RCA, that meant China had to cancel the Mackay deal; for Mackay, that meant upholding its deal. Despite his personal preference for RCA, Zhu chose to support Mackay. This decision was consistent with Zhu's broader goals. The Mackay agreement had been signed with the full and legitimate authority of his own Ministry. To break

that deal in order to mollify the very unpopular RCA threatened to undermine the Ministry's overall authority over radio so recently acquired.⁵¹

For Zhu, backing Mackay had an added advantage of triggering an arbitration clause written into the RCA contract. That arbitration clause was designed to settle such disputes at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Arbitration settled in China's favor would bolster the Communications Ministry's authority over radio with a binding decision by a prestigious international body. Conversely, an RCA victory still benefited China by triggering a cancellation clause in the Mackay contract that excused China of any financial liability. China would be spared the embarrassment of being forced to pay damages to Mackay. Zhu settled on squeezing some more concessions out of Mackay that gave his Ministry a more favorable slice of revenues and then moved to vigorously defend the legality of the Mackay contract.⁵² Of RCA's allegations that the Mackay agreement violated the terms of RCA's contract, Zhu wrote to George Shecklen that "a [c]areful check has...been made...but nothing of violation can be found."⁵³ With the Ministry firmly behind Mackay, one ITT representative in China gloated that Mackay had "wrecked the RCA in China."⁵⁴ That statement alone underscores the paramount ITT view that this conflict was about pummeling arch-rival RCA, regardless of any connection to China's national interest.

It is tempting to criticize RCA for re-opening the little used Mukden-San Francisco circuit at a cost of alienating important Chinese state actors. That move ultimately threatened the profitability of its heavily trafficked Shanghai-San Francisco connection. The China market, however, was not RCA's only focus. The decision to restart the Mukden-San Francisco circuit was a friendly (if largely symbolic) gesture toward Japan that RCA hoped might help check ITT's courting of the Japanese government. And even though their cooperation with Mukden provoked the signing of the Mackay agreement, RCA executives were confident that the legal merits of RCA's position guaranteed victory over China and ITT. Moreover, that certain victory, RCA believed, could be used to seek injunctions in American courts against ITT, forcing the company to abandon its practices of obtaining contracts for parallel circuits. Scoring a victory at The Hague might even lay to rest the ongoing investigations RCA faced in the hostile and depression-plagued US domestic climate.⁵⁵

The case was presented to The Hague in 1935. RCA argued that its contract with China gave it the sole legal right to Sino-American radio-telegraphy. As such, the company demanded that the Mackay circuit cease operating. Furthermore, RCA wanted China to provide a full

accounting of all telegrams sent over the circuit and reimburse RCA for its losses. Those losses would be calculated as equivalent to the value of all the telegrams sent over the Mackay line, with RCA's legal costs covered as well.⁵⁶

China's lawyers vigorously challenged RCA's claims. First, they disputed the assertion that RCA enjoyed the exclusive right to control direct Sino-American radio communications and that all such Sino-American radio communications must travel over the RCA circuit. The fact that RCA's contract permitted messages to be sent along another circuit if requested by the sender, China argued, invalidated that specious claim. The possibility of choosing an alternate route to the US, China claimed, implied another company could provide direct Sino-American radiotelegraphy service. As such, China rejected RCA's contention that this clause only allowed senders to request an alternate *indirect* route to the US, and not a circuit that ran parallel to RCA's line. Indeed, the contract stipulation that permitted China to reach agreements with other nations further invalidated RCA's insistence that its contract only permitted one Sino-American connection. Second, China's lawyers disputed RCA's assertion that the operation of Mackay's Sino-American circuit in competition with RCA's Sino-American circuit violated China's contractual pledge to cooperate with RCA. In China's view, that stipulation only referred to the technical operation of the circuit, and did not impose any broader obligations on either party.⁵⁷

In an unexpected defeat for RCA, the court ruled in China's favor. While the panel of three arbitrators from Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland agreed that certain clauses gave RCA a special position in Sino-American communications, nothing, they ruled, "goes further in the sense of establishing exclusive obligations" that stood at the heart of RCA's case. The Chinese Government, the arbitrators ruled, could not solicit traffic for or direct it to the Mackay route. However, the China-RCA agreements lacked any explicit stipulations that restricted China's freedom to sign radio agreements with competing parties. "As a sovereign government, on principle free in its action for the public interest as it sees it, it cannot be presumed to have accepted such a restriction of its freedom of action, unless the acceptance of such restriction can be ascertained distinctly and beyond reasonable doubt." The mere fact that the Mackay station might cut into RCA's profits, the arbitrators ruled, provided insufficient grounds to find that the Chinese government had violated RCA's contract. The Hague decision validated the Ministry of Communications' authority over radio and the Nationalist government's sovereign authority over its radio policies. Compounding

the adverse consequences of this decision for RCA, the company's worst fears were realized when, while preparing for its case before The Hague, the Mackay company and Japan signed a contract that challenged RCA's vital Japanese business.⁵⁸

At this point, RCA found itself in dire straits at home and abroad. An RCA legal memorandum assessing a US government investigation of its international communications practices was blunt. "The present difficulties of RCA are very great," the brief stated. "RCA Communications, Inc., cannot survive if it is compelled to permit its joint adventurers to be faithless to it, to use in many instances the equipment and patents and technical information obtained from RCA for the benefit of an RCA competitor."⁵⁹ Mackay's push for duplicate circuits made "the future for RCA Communications... very black indeed," a troubled William Winterbottom told the Federal Communications Commission. "[P]rogress, as far as RCAC is concerned, in the development of radio communication would end."⁶⁰

The Hague decision brought RCA to a crossroads, where it began to reassess its entire business strategy. RCA was being squeezed in East Asia, where a combination of aggressive ITT business strategies, Chinese state-building policies, and Sino-Japanese conflict had pushed it into a corner. A similar pattern was playing out across the globe, as ITT's international expansion had undermined RCA's once-thriving international radiotelegraphy business. Despite a strong start to the decade, by the end of the 1930s RCA had become a relatively weak force in telecommunications in the Pacific and East Asia. Its only international stronghold remained in South America, where earlier agreements had long secured the company's dominant position. In the aftermath of the defeat at The Hague, RCA's options were limited. The company began to withdraw from the international communications field, although it did so now under duress, and without the benefit of the large payoff envisioned in the now defunct RCA-ITT merger plans from the late 1920s.⁶¹

* * *

Who "won," who "lost"? On the narrow corporate level, one might say ITT won and RCA lost. But ITT's victory owed much to the complexities of Chinese domestic politics. Its original contract was negotiated with a rebellious faction of Nationalists protesting RCA's cooperation with Japan in Manchuria. That contract's survival after Chiang Kai-shek triumphed over his domestic enemies owed much to a political climate that dictated a continued attack against RCA in light of its activities in

Manchuria. In the end, ITT did more than drive RCA from the China market. It also secured a contract with Japan, the worst-case scenario RCA had been determined to avoid when it made the original decision to cooperate with Mukden. In this light, RCA was the loser.

But expand the frame of reference and the answers are not so clear-cut. What did RCA really lose? RCA's setbacks in international communications simply ended up shifting the company's focus to the American domestic market, where it earned billions of dollars in revenue and largely thrived throughout the duration of the twentieth century. ITT meanwhile "won" in China, but the lingering effects of the Great Depression and increasing economic nationalism of the 1930s wreaked havoc on ITT's international communications business. Its expansive international system continued to teeter on the brink of bankruptcy even as RCA retreated from international communications.⁶² ITT's later resurgence as an American corporate giant had nothing to do with China, which had fallen to a communist revolution in 1949.

Moreover, what did Chiang's Nationalists win? That government, whose state-building strategies with regard to radio appeared so effective, still could not withstand the devastating effects of a long war against Japan from 1937–45 and a subsequent civil war against the Chinese Communists that ended with Chiang Kai-shek's defeat in 1949. Japan's Guandong Army, the main instigator of RCA's travails in China, did not enjoy long-term success either. Their actions, effective as they were in Manchuria, ultimately pushed Japan toward a devastating war against the United States, a war that ended with Japan's defeat, its ouster from China, and the destruction of the Guandong Army itself. The defeat discredited the militarist vision of Japan's national interests that had propelled the Guandong Army's actions, while an increasingly pacifist Japan that embraced warm relations with the United States emerged in its stead.⁶³

The "transnational structuring" explored here, however, is less about the winners and losers at any given time, and more about how international and domestic playing fields are altered by the interactions between nation-states, domestic political actors, and transnational companies. A central premise of transnational structuring is that under the guise of "national interest," ideas, agreements, policies, regulatory measures, laws, and institutions generated by these interactions can produce lasting effects beyond the partisan or parochial interests they were initially designed to serve. Once a new idea, agreement, regulatory measure, law, policy, or institution is put into play, new actors can co-opt them to achieve objectives different from those that surrounded

their origins. For example, in the late 1920s when RCA originally negotiated radio agreements with two rival Chinese regimes – Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalists in Nanjing and Zhang Zuolin's warlord regime in Manchuria – its primary goal was to increase the value of RCA Communications so it could be sold profitably to ITT. When in 1928 the Manchurian regime was incorporated into its Nationalist Chinese counterpart, the Nationalists co-opted the RCA Manchurian agreement to serve its radio development plans, which were part of the regime's broader state-building objectives seeking to establish central authority over radio.

However, when Japan's Guandong Army took over Manchuria in 1931, the Japanese co-opted that same agreement and used it to achieve quasi-recognition of its control over Manchuria, which further undermined the Chinese state. Meanwhile, with the global depression having wrecked any chance of RCA selling its communications subsidiary to ITT, RCA recommitted itself to international radio. To demonstrate the high value RCA placed on its profitable relationship with Japan, the company agreed to continue the execution of its Manchuria contract despite the ouster of Chinese authority. Such a show of good faith toward Japan involving Manchuria, however, was incompatible with Chinese nationalism. For that reason, the Ministry of Communications signed the 1932 radio contract with ITT-subsidary Mackay to establish a new Sino-American radiotelegraphy circuit in direct competition with RCA, a move that ultimately signaled the demise of RCA's China business.

This move against RCA, however, did not reflect a coherent Chinese pursuit of defending perceived national interests against a foreign affront. Instead, it captured a behind-the-scenes political battle brewing between Chiang Kai-shek and his domestic rivals who were opposed to Chiang's conservatism and seeming acquiescence to Japanese aggression. RCA's ties to Chiang's regime did not help matters. The Mackay contract, negotiated by Chiang rival Chen Mingshu, was thereby an effort to undermine both Chiang's and RCA's positions. Even though Chiang solidified his power after defeating the rebellion that Chen had subsequently joined, the newly invigorated Nationalists decided to throw their support behind the Mackay agreement negotiated by their ousted domestic opponents. By turning against RCA, the Nationalists distanced themselves from a now-unpopular company, helped shore up their nationalist credentials, and confirmed the Communications Ministry's authority over radio that the regime had worked so hard to secure. The favorable decision at The Hague validated the Nationalist

strategy of vigorously defending a contract initially conceived as a tool to undermine Chiang Kai-shek's authority.

This conclusion, reached through the interpretative framework of transnational structuring, thereby draws into question two popular and related historical interpretations regarding the relationship of transnational interests with the national state. First, analyses contend that transnational corporations generally weaken the authority of national governments in their pursuit of their own corporate interests. Anthony Sampson specifically drew this conclusion in his historical survey of ITT.⁶⁴ Through an exploration of the RCA-ITT rivalry in China, this analysis shows that actors within nation-states are also capable of using transnational corporations in the context of domestic and international rivalries in ways that can increase the power of a nation-state. This analysis also challenges the corollary interpretation that wireless international communication necessarily undermines national sovereignty due to its ability to permeate international borders at will.⁶⁵ This case study instead demonstrates that a nation-state can use international communications to affirm its sovereignty. Whether power and sovereignty are reduced or increased is not so much contingent on the international communications medium itself, but how communications intersect with and are deployed in the context of the domestic political rivalries within a state, the international rivalries between states, and the transnational corporate actors seeking advantage over each other.⁶⁶

Despite the absence of clear winners or losers in the RCA-ITT-China-Japan battle of the 1930s, the long-term effects of this transnational structuring through Sino-American radiotelegraphy are evident as well. To the extent that RCA and Mackay contributed to broader Nationalist state-building efforts, recent studies have demonstrated the longevity of that influence well beyond the period of Nationalist control over the Chinese mainland. After 1949, both Taiwan's Nationalists and the mainland's Communists benefited in the postwar era from the development of planning, institutions, laws, and skilled personnel that emerged during Chiang's first decade in power.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, following its setbacks in China and elsewhere, RCA's retreat from international communications in favor of the American domestic radio market impacted the options and alternatives (and costs) other radio interests confronted both within the United States and abroad.

In the final analysis, those initial predictions of increased Sino-American trade and understanding that greeted RCA's inaugural involvement in Sino-American radiotelegraphy were clearly trumped

by the bitter international conflict that ultimately brought RCA and China before The Hague. Like the comparable predictions of mutually beneficial exchanges that followed Federal Telegraph to China in the early 1920s, the overly simplistic presumptions that greeted RCA's initiative in China reflected the view that technology is a force that stands outside of society, primarily impacting the peoples with which it comes into contact. Technology, in this view, is not only unhindered by any existing political, economic, cultural, or social dynamics, but can change those dynamics at will. These predictions, however, overlook how technology is itself shaped by the broader environment in which it functions.

RCA's experience in 1930s China, like Federal's a decade earlier, demonstrates the significance of technology's grounding in its wider context. RCA's Sino-American radiotelegraphy connections never functioned as a "neutral" communications medium through which Chinese and Americans simply exchanged ideas and information to their mutual benefit. The development of RCA's Sino-American radiotelegraphy occurred in the context of Chinese state-building and domestic political rivalries, the Sino-Japanese conflict, and RCA-ITT global competition. Sino-American radiotelegraphy no doubt impacted the dynamics of these three struggles. However, those three contestations also established the parameters that guided the development of Sino-American radiotelegraphy throughout the decade. Any account of technological development cannot be told without reference to that two-way relationship between the technology and its broader societal context. The story of Sino-American radiotelegraphy development in the 1930s is no exception.

3

“By Some It Is Doubted If the Chinese Will Ever Become Radio Fans”: Sino-American Relations and Chinese Broadcasting during the Interwar Era

W.A. Estes was confused. He had come home to the United States from Shanghai, where he was living, for an extended visit in June 1924. He hoped to bring a radio with him on his return, but he did not wish to run afoul of China's 1915 radio law. This relic of the pre-broadcasting era identified all radio equipment as military contraband and prohibited its importation and possession. Estes contacted the US State Department for guidance as he prepared for his return trip in early 1925. “Before I left China last June I know that many such sets, made in the United States and Europe, were in constant use in Shanghai,” he wrote. Sets were easily acquired, and “reliable firms” sold them. Estes did not base his query solely on the assumption that reliable firms abided by the law; he also mentioned the exhortations of a local minister who urged his parishioners, and their friends living up to 400 miles from Shanghai, to purchase radios. Certainly a minister would not encourage his flock to break the law! But despite indications that the restrictive statute would be eased, Estes continued to receive letters from friends in China lamenting the confiscation of their sets. “I shall be very grateful for information in regard to this matter,” Estes concluded. “I am returning to Shanghai in August and hope to be able to take a radio receiving set with me.”¹

The process that unfolded after Washington responded to Estes' query provides an excellent opportunity to explore the intersection

between broadcasting and Sino-American relations in the period before the Second World War. Estes' desire to bring his radio to China partly spoke to Open Door concerns for market access. Comparable to the controversies over radiotelegraphy, an American disregard for rising Chinese nationalism and the persistent gap that separated the idealistic rhetoric of the Open Door from the self-interested reality of American policies complicated the Sino-American struggles over broadcasting. At the same time, Westerners – especially Americans – tended to view the spread of Western technology, such as radio, as intrinsically desirable and destined to occur along roughly the same lines as in the West, generally under Western direction. Such assumptions fostered a disregard for the values, interests, and ideas of non-Western peoples – a worldview guaranteed to provoke hostility among the growing numbers of nationalistic Chinese weary of Western contempt.²

The diplomatic travails that followed Estes' letter speak to this combination of historical issues. As shortsighted American policymakers considered China's emerging broadcasting market over the next two decades, they typically dismissed Chinese concerns and laws. Informed by culturally biased assumptions about Western technology's potential in a non-Western society, key State Department officials doubted that radio broadcasting could ever take root in China. Their conclusions assumed the societal forces that shaped American broadcasting were irrelevant in China and precluded its development. They did not consider the possibility of alternative models of development. The issues explored in this chapter – Washington's response to Estes, American consular reports on Chinese broadcasting's prospects, and the handling of Sino-American radio controversies by China-based American officials during the interwar era – highlight that cultural misunderstanding.

American myopia came with a price. The Chinese Nationalists took power at the end of the 1920s and broadcasting – like radiotelegraphy – occupied a critical position in the new regime's policies. The Nationalists designed their broadcasting policies with an eye toward curtailing imperialism while building an economically and politically vibrant Chinese state. By the 1930s, American disregard for these policies had predictably antagonized Chinese nationalism and provoked a calculated and effective response against American radio. In the end, the American efforts to make sense of Chinese broadcasting and craft a policy to approach this emerging market highlighted an American incapacity to comprehend other cultural norms and understand China's determination to control its future.

American views of Chinese radio

When Estes' letter arrived in Washington, the State Department was unsure how to answer it. Three years earlier, a department official had scolded a missionary who had considered taking his radio into China's interior. At that time, Assistant Secretary of State Leland Harrison believed that possessing a radio in rural China "might well give rise to needless gossip and rumours" among peasants whose suspicions would certainly be aroused by antennas and wires. His concerns spoke to a presumably irrational Chinese resistance to modern technology, of a sort that Westerners often ascribed to non-Westerners. But with Estes documenting radio's increasing popularity in both city and countryside, that advice no longer seemed applicable.³

Broadcasting's rapid emergence owed much to civil war and imperialism. In the decade preceding Estes' letter, central authority in China had disintegrated, and warlordism wracked the country. Foreign-controlled enclaves had been established in the major cities during the



Figure 3.1 Leland Harrison, 1922 (National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

nineteenth century, and rights of extraterritoriality put treaty ports such as Shanghai under Western jurisdiction.⁴ Although international communications treaties specifically exempted radio from extraterritorial privileges, treaty port authorities removed from the direct reach of Chinese authorities had little motivation to acknowledge that exemption.⁵ Meanwhile, warlords often ignored national radio regulations in their respective territories. That a basic receiver could be built from relatively inexpensive components further fueled the medium's growth amid Chinese political and legal tumult.⁶

China Press reporter Irene Kuhn recollected how the prevalence of these personally assembled sets impacted how she approached her own inaugural broadcast, delivered over Shanghai's new KRC station in December 1924. The station, a joint venture between the *China Press* and the Kellogg Switchboard Company, was intended to promote the newspaper and its reporting. KRC arranged a program that included several musical numbers that preceded the actual newscast. The musical prelude was, in part, intended to give the station's engineers time to make sure KRC's first broadcast was actually transmitting. In addition, Kuhn noted that "[t]he musical interval also provided time for the funny homemade sets which had sprouted up in Hongkong, Soochow [Suzhou], Hankow [Hankou], Peking [Beijing], and the outports, to warm up before the 'main event.'"⁷

As Estes' letter and station KRC underscored, broadcasting had become particularly prevalent in Shanghai, China's largest city and a treaty port since 1842. Its more than three million people resided in three independent jurisdictions: the British-dominated International Settlement, the French Concession, and the Chinese city. By the early 1920s, civil war magnified Shanghai's jurisdictional confusion; the foreign-controlled areas were relatively stable, while turmoil raged beyond those boundaries. It was in such confused circumstances that E.G. Osborn, a British-born American entrepreneur, established China's first broadcasting station in Shanghai's International Settlement in 1922. Over the next few years a handful of other British, Japanese, and American concerns followed suit, establishing broadcasting enterprises like station KRC, which lay outside the purview of Chinese authority.⁸

Against this backdrop, Leland Harrison offered no objection to Estes' desire to return with his radio to Shanghai, although he admitted that the murky legal situation posed some risk. Shortly thereafter, Harrison learned that Shanghai's customs commissioner had started seizing all electrical equipment clearly intended for illicit use in radio; equipment with uses that included but also went beyond radio (such as certain types of generators and battery cells) would receive the benefit of the

doubt. Harrison promptly sent a second note to Estes retracting his initial counsel and advised him to leave the radio home.⁹

Harrison's responses to Estes exposed Washington's poor knowledge of broadcasting in China. Consular officials, however, had already begun collecting information on foreign broadcasting markets to improve American understanding and access to them.¹⁰ Detailed reports on Chinese radio reached Washington in subsequent years. Still, the overall picture remained muddled. Some regional authorities relaxed radio regulations, but by decade's end fewer than twenty broadcasting stations were operating in China; in a country of four hundred million people, receiving sets numbered only in the thousands.¹¹ In radio-friendly areas, especially the treaty ports and the Japanese-dominated northeast, American analysts highlighted the international competition for market share. Several foreign companies (predominantly English, German, French, Danish, Japanese, and American interests) imported vital components, such as vacuum tubes, generators, and batteries, generally through Shanghai, where the customs commissioner continued to let such items enter unmolested.¹² The city was China's broadcasting capital, and claimed about three thousand receivers in operation. Guangzhou was second with a thousand sets. Close proximity to British Hong Kong and its broadcast stations facilitated the smuggling of sets and parts, especially when local Chinese authorities proved open to bribery.¹³ However, continued enforcement of the 1915 statutes by other regional authorities stunted broadcasting's growth in those outlying areas.¹⁴

Broadcasting's geographically limited beginnings in China and the international competition surrounding it inspired several American officials to speculate about the medium's future there. Could Americans profit from this emerging market? In June 1925, David Berger, the American Consul in Tianjin, a treaty port southeast of Beijing where broadcasting had gained a toehold, offered Washington his impressions. For the moment, Berger reported, converted electrical equipment fueled the medium's rise. He nonetheless doubted the long-term potential of the Tianjin market. "There is of course a small group who would be interested for a short time in the radio as another Western curiosity," he wrote. Wealthy Chinese might purchase radios in small numbers, as they "would appeal to them as a new Western novelty" and, he speculated, "serve to increase their prestige with their less fortunate fellow townsmen who would probably be allowed to listen to the radio on occasion."¹⁵

This analysis betrayed a particularly American view of technology. Berger assumed that radio ownership signaled high status to the "less fortunate." In 1920s America, numerous technological gadgets – radios,

telephones, household appliances, cars – emerged as status symbols in a new consumer culture.¹⁶ Berger simply applied this understanding to China. Other prejudices compounded his doubts about the future of Chinese broadcasting. “The Chinese home is so very uncomfortable...[and] the American habit of an evening at home with the family is generally unknown.” How, Berger wondered, could broadcasting develop in a country where a home’s central purpose at night was merely to provide “a place to sleep”? Under the circumstances, “[t]he American habit of staying up and reading, playing games and so forth or, in recent years, listening to the radio... never developed to any extent in China.” In Berger’s view, the absence of a necessary linkage between home, leisure time, and radio doomed Chinese broadcasting.¹⁷

Shanghai Consul General Edwin Cunningham struck a more optimistic note. As far back as 1923, only a year after the city’s first broadcasting station commenced operations, he had touted broadcasting’s bright future there. A new broadcasting station capable of receiving and retransmitting entertainment programming from San Francisco excited the city’s American community.¹⁸ To be sure, Cunningham was troubled by the fact that ten American companies poised to sell radios in the city found their applications for import permits stalled. With other companies selling radios in Shanghai, Cunningham implored China’s Special Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, Xu Yuan, to change China’s radio policy and correct this violation of the Open Door principle of equal economic access. After all, Cunningham reasoned, “radio operations are now in general use in Shanghai, and this is much to the credit of the progressiveness of the town as well as to those Chinese people in the various parts of China who insist upon securing radio sets.” “It is a modern invention,” Cunningham continued, “and China is to be commended for her progressive disposition in obtaining the sets.”¹⁹

In asserting that many progressive Chinese used radio, Cunningham apparently hoped to flatter his Chinese counterpart and prompt changes favorable to American radio imports. In the process, he betrayed his own assumption of a positive correlation between technological development and social progress. However, his appeal to Xu Yuan failed. The Ministry of Communications never wavered in its position that “radio apparatus of any sort cannot be permitted importation.”²⁰

Official rebuffs notwithstanding, Cunningham’s reports to Washington remained optimistic concerning the potential for radio in China. In 1927 the first Chinese-controlled station hit the airwaves. In early 1928 Cunningham wrote that Chinese radio listeners – not foreigners – represented the vanguard of Shanghai broadcasting. Though

he had no specific numerical breakdowns to offer, he believed that of the three thousand crystal sets in use throughout the city, "by far, the greater majority... are installed in the homes of Chinese." Cunningham hoped that the foreign population's enthusiasm would soon match the level that Shanghai Chinese demonstrated in their listening habits.²¹

Cunningham's broader view of China, however, tempered this enthusiasm. The long-serving Consul General had become myopically "Shanghai-minded" (to quote the journalist Helen Foster Snow). Indicative of the type of life Cunningham enjoyed in familiar Shanghai, he and his wife especially enjoyed hosting lavish parties where one could rub elbows with China's elites. The China that lay beyond "progressive" Westernized Shanghai, however, was just not a part of Cunningham's everyday experiences. It is not surprising that Cunningham's Shanghai-minded disposition shone through in his evaluation of broadcasting's future in China. "[O]n the account of the low standard of living and poverty of the masses," he wrote, "it is only the more affluent Chinese who will be able to afford radio sets." For that reason, prospects for broadcasting beyond the foreign-controlled city seemed bleak, he concluded.²²

As with David Berger in Tianjin, American class and status assumptions concerning household technologies influenced Cunningham's view. To be sure, rather than simply assume irrational Chinese opposition to Western technology, both Berger and Cunningham introduced specific Chinese social institutions into their analyses – the family, the home, and the economy – and then considered how those factors would shape Chinese broadcasting. But both analyzed Chinese interaction with radio only to the extent that it might permit a duplication of the American broadcasting model. They never considered that a different but equally sustainable broadcasting framework could establish itself in China. Interestingly, the most visible obstacle to broadcasting – the law – never entered their analyses. With so many other factors supposedly working against radio, the law was an afterthought.

In contrast to Cunningham and Berger's pessimism, the American Consul at Dalian liked broadcasting's prospects in the Japanese-controlled Guandong Leased Territory.²³ Japanese authorities changed the local laws to permit broadcasting, made arrangements to introduce a commercial broadcasting station, and allowed programmers to transmit entertainment programming over the official outlet until the construction of the new station was complete. Consul Leo Sturgeon surmised that the more than seventy-five hundred telephones and three thousand phonographs installed throughout Guandong spoke well for broadcasting's future. In fact, residents were already applying for

receiver permits.²⁴ Japanese, American, and German radios ranging in price from US\$31 to US\$125 already sat on store shelves, while fourteen additional American firms had applications pending. Sturgeon stressed the accessibility of radio; many students bought parts to build inexpensive sets. "Almost every day furnished new evidence of the very marked popularity of radio with the general public," he exclaimed. The Chinese, however, were marginal players. "Doubtless the Japanese element in the population will lead the way," he opined, although "many Chinese as well as foreigners are expected to avail themselves of the opportunity to use radio." Nonetheless, Sturgeon concluded, it was because of Japanese influence that "this market will undergo very rapid development."²⁵

This conclusion reflected the general Western admiration for Japan's swift modernization. Sturgeon downplayed corollary concerns about China's stagnation and suggested that the Chinese might follow the Japanese example. Nonetheless, he still looked to Japanese technological leadership in radio. Moreover, Sturgeon's attention to commercialized entertainment broadcasting showed the familiar tendency to look for factors that promoted something akin to American radio.²⁶

Samuel Sobokin, the American Consul in the Manchurian city of Mukden, also expressed optimism about broadcasting's future in that region. The warlord Zhang Zuolin nominally governed Manchuria, which lay adjacent to Guandong. However – as the previous chapter noted – the Japanese army stationed in the territory provided Zhang with critical support against rival warlords in exchange for his protection of Japan's economic and strategic interests in the region. Manchuria's new radio regulations permitted ownership of licensed radio receivers, and a French company built a broadcasting station for Zhang's government.²⁷ Although privately owned stations were prohibited, commercial enterprises could make arrangements to broadcast their programs over the official outlet. "[T]here are excellent prospects for the sale of sets and parts because of the official encouragement of radio broadcasting," Sobokin concluded.²⁸

Sobokin's colleague in Mukden, Myrl Myers, did not share his optimism. "[B]y some it is doubted if the Chinese will ever become radio fans," he wrote. "Certainly the prospects of the local broadcasting station proving a profitable business undertaking are extremely small." Myers maintained a slim hope that the Chinese might eventually embrace broadcasting. "[I]n view of the potential public interest in it as exhibited in many countries, particularly the United States," Myers argued, "it may become far more important than its insignificant beginnings foreshadow."²⁹

Perhaps Sobokin's and Myers's conflicting conclusions arose from different analytical focuses. Sobokin's favorable assessment came from

examining the actions taken by the regional authorities, widely presumed to be subordinate to Japan.³⁰ Myers reached his negative conclusions based on his assessment of potential Chinese listeners. Yet each consul remained attuned to the possibility that Manchuria might produce something similar to American entertainment broadcasting. In that both Sobokin and Myers mirrored the approach taken by other consular officials.³¹

The swirl of inchoate analyses did not provide Washington with a clear recommendation about how US nationals should regard China's multiple and often-conflicting radio laws. Nelson Johnson, Assistant Secretary of State and the former head of Far Eastern Affairs for the State Department, determined that the department "does not hold the view that the prohibitory regulations formerly issued at Peking [Beijing] ... should be held to stop American citizens from taking advantage of any more lenient regulations that may be issued or enforced at particular ports." Johnson, who had become disgusted with China's wider political disarray, found confirmation of his views in the consular reports. In that context, his inclination to disregard China's national radio laws when it benefited Americans makes sense. The approach, however, would come back to haunt him.³²

Broadcasting and the Nationalists

China was in the throes of a dramatic political transformation by the late 1920s. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists claimed national power in 1927. Just as radiotelegraphy factored into the new government's efforts to establish a strong state to preside over a long-divided China where warlords still enjoyed independent powerbases, control of the mass media also occupied an important place on the regime's state-building agenda. Mass media were tools that could potentially forge true national unity. Through control of media outlets, the Nationalists sought to mobilize the population behind their vision of China's future. They censored newspapers and movies to suppress opposition viewpoints. They insisted that movies promote modernism and scientific ideas and exclude superstitious or "racy" ones, and they attempted to eliminate dialect films (especially Cantonese) in favor of Mandarin films to foster a national language. The Nationalists also understood the importance of popular music, widespread through movies and phonographs: they used patriotic songs to mobilize support behind the new state, while concurrently banning the performance or distribution of "[m]usic which is believed to be damaging to public morals or decadent."³³



Figure 3.2 Nelson Johnson, 1925 (National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

This interest in music affected broadcasting policy. In 1929, new radio laws created a licensing scheme for broadcasting stations and permitted the possession of licensed radio receivers. Effective licensing could keep songs identified as “damaging to public morals or decadent” off the airwaves. Xiao Youmei, the Nationalist official who directed music policy,

urged broadcasters to exercise good judgment. "I would...hope each and every wireless station will ask an expert to help them choose an inventory of good music." The Nationalists enacted a variety of measures designed to compel broadcasters to provide programming that conformed "to the principles of the Party" and had a "righteous purpose." As with movies, music could not be "obscene," "vulgar," "defy scientific principles," "contain superstitions, spirits, or ghosts," or "promote feudal thinking." After 1936, the regime bolstered its power to approve a station's schedule, insisted that educational features occupy 40 percent of the airtime, and mandated retransmissions of government broadcasts for one hour each evening.³⁴

China's Nanjing Decade (1927–37) witnessed significant growth in broadcasting. Before war with Japan erupted in 1937, Nationalist radio regulations permitted the importation of radio sets.³⁵ To the delight of Open Door enthusiasts, American companies led the radio trade, generally claiming more than 50 percent of the market, with Great Britain, Japan, Germany, and the Netherlands capturing far smaller shares (table 3.1).³⁶ But Nationalist economic policy aimed to break this reliance on foreign sources. During the 1930s, the government developed the industrial infrastructure needed to support a Chinese broadcasting industry, and by 1937 China's Central Electrical Manufacturing Works was a major domestic supplier of radio equipment.³⁷ China's broadcasting stations increased in number from fewer than twenty at the end of 1933 to nearly one hundred by 1937. The Nationalist government predictably controlled many of the new stations and designed programming – including political and economic news, informational broadcasts on public health and rural reconstruction policies, English and Chinese language lessons, and scientific and technical lectures – to promote modernization.³⁸

As Chinese broadcasting expanded, popular commercial programming reflected a mix of economic, cultural, and political influences. In Shanghai, economic constraints fueled the emergence of inexpensive, low-powered stations that operated out of makeshift studios permeated by the sounds of the city's busy streets. These stations adapted traditional forms of entertainment – such as musical comedy and storytelling – to radio programming. Such hybrids were very popular, and on the eve of war they competed for audience and airtime with government broadcasts and officially sanctioned educational features.³⁹

The listening audience expanded significantly during this era. The number of receivers rose steadily to around five hundred thousand by 1937 (some estimates went as high as a million). One radio set might have as many as ten listeners, it was further estimated, so the Chinese radio audience potentially reached into the millions. Receivers

Table 3.1 Market share by country based on the total annual monetary value of radio imports into China (excluding Hong Kong and Manchuria)

	1932 (%)	1933 (%)	1934 (%)	1935 (%)	1936 (%)
United States	65	57.5	68.5	45.5	55
Germany	18	8	4.5	11	10
Great Britain	4.5	23.5	15.5	17	13
Italy	1	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	0
Japan	6	2	8	23	15
Netherlands	2	4	2.5	2	2.5
Others	3	5	0.5	0.5	4.5

Note: Although these numbers are useful for assessing market position in a given year, changes in the methods used to tabulate imports make it problematic to compare values across different years. Values for 1932, 1933 and 1936 reflect all types of radio parts and sets, while the values for 1934 and 1935 are limited to switches, lightning arresters, keys, coils, and complete radio sets and units. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest half percent. Due to rounding total percentages for each year do not always add up to 100 percent.

Source: Based on statistics from A. Viola Smith, "Radio Markets-China," March 11, 1937, p. 105, File "Foreign Service-Copies of Reports-Peiping [Beiping/Beijing]-1937-March," Box 124, BFDC Attachés' Reports.

popular among elite Western-educated Chinese buyers included three-to-eight-tube tabletop sets with a wide reception range that could be purchased for between US\$45 and US\$150. Poorer, less-educated listeners, primarily concerned with local programming, were drawn to cheap Japanese sets with a very limited reception range, which could be had for a few dollars. Battery-operated sets made significant inroads in areas where electric power was unreliable or absent. Poor reception due to atmospheric conditions in south China during the hot and humid summer months created a large demand there for combination receiver-phonograph sets.⁴⁰

The expansion of the radio audience was a national phenomenon. Chinese firms ventured into nationwide distribution of equipment. The Ministry of Education equipped thousands of schools throughout China with receiving sets in an effort to raise education and literacy levels while exposing China's youth to the Nationalists' vision for the nation. The Nationalists also used shortwave and loudspeakers to develop a mass audience in impoverished rural areas, where personal receivers were impractical. Broadcasting's growth took radio well beyond the urban-centered elite audience envisioned in American consular reports.⁴¹



Figure 3.3 Fuzhou Road in Shanghai, c. 1931 (Keystone View Company, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

Radio's growing popularity among Chinese from all walks of life was easy to spot. Former American Minister to China Charles Crane, one of the earliest advocates of the ill-fated Federal Telegraph contracts, marveled at broadcasting's rapid proliferation upon returning to the country for a visit in 1936. "Cheap radios have been planted all over China," he wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt, with whom he served in the Wilson administration. Another American eyewitness in 1935 expressed amazement at the "squatters" outside Nanjing, "poor people... living in improvised bamboo mat hovels... [with] dirt floors" who enjoyed "the luxury of radios, little crystal sets probably costing no more than the equivalent of 50 or 60 cents American currency." That observer wryly noted that the materials for their makeshift shelters cost



Figure 3.4 Charles Crane (on right, pictured with former New York Senator James O'Gorman), 1920 (National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photograph Division, Library of Congress)

nearly as much as the radios. In 1937, an American trade official marveled that “[f]ormerly when traveling through rural areas practically no antennas were to be seen. Today a network of bamboo poles and wires on the humblest of buildings in small villages attests the extent to which radio has penetrated the country.” That same year, the former Nationalist Minister of Communications Zhu Jiahua observed that “[c]ity and country folk alike are rapidly becoming ‘radio-minded,’ particularly the illiterate masses, many of whom find the loud-speaker

their chief source of entertainment and instruction concerning conditions outside their own towns or villages."⁴²

But the foreign concessions complicated Nationalist efforts to develop and control broadcasting. Lacking jurisdiction in those areas, the Nationalists could not regulate the broadcasts, which could reach Chinese listeners both inside and outside the concessions. Nor could they police the possession of radio receivers there. However, there were precedents for dealing effectively with foreign disregard for China's communications laws. The Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) had effectively reined in illegal foreign abuses of concession-based wired telegraphy during the nineteenth century by chopping down telegraph poles, cutting wires, and building a Chinese-controlled system in their place.⁴³ The Nationalists effectively reined in the foreign abuses surrounding wireless telegraphy during the Warlord Era (1916–27) after claiming power in 1927, and developed a thriving wireless network throughout the country with connections across the globe. That pattern of foreign abuses in the face of ineffectual warlord regimes continued with broadcasting's emergence during the 1920s, and the Nationalists were determined to extend their authority over this new medium as well. Broadcasting's ability to reach large audiences compounded the perceived urgency of the situation.⁴⁴

The Nationalists sought to bypass the concessions' jurisdictional immunity and assert full control over broadcasting in China, and in this aim Chinese nationalism was the regime's ally. As listeners became aware of the foreign presence on China's airwaves, some grew appalled and irate. They lauded advertisements for Chinese products, while commercials for foreign products elicited angry reactions. "Your ads for Palmolive disgust me," wrote one infuriated listener to a Chinese-owned station in Shanghai during 1933. "[W]hy not peddle domestic goods?"⁴⁵ Such sentiments were potentially useful to the Nationalists, who after coming to power had lost some nationalist support because Chiang Kai-shek and other key party leaders preferred to establish their rule more firmly and augment the country's strength before directly challenging Japanese imperial ambitions in China. Chiang, after all, led a country still plagued by lingering party and warlord divisions, as well as a rival communist movement that his Northern Expedition failed to extinguish.⁴⁶ In this volatile political environment, challenging foreign trespasses on China's airwaves presented an opportunity for the regime to recapture some of the popular support that other policies had forfeited.

Nationalist policy consistently sought to force foreign broadcasters to comply with Chinese law, and in some cases to force them off the air.

The influential Zhu Jiahua, Minister of Communications from 1933 to 1935, pushed for China to “assert its sovereign rights” over radio, which foreign interests had violated. This disposition did not immediately translate into conflict with the Americans. Between 1928 and 1934 the Nationalists had to weather intra-party rivalries, domestic opposition, and Japanese imperialism, including the conquest of Manchuria and a short but destructive war at Shanghai during 1931–32. The new regime also had to familiarize itself with the maze of radio contracts and stations that had emerged during the Warlord Era and then tackle the complex task of reorganizing government agencies to permit the effective regulation of China’s telecommunications. By late 1933, intra-party rivalries had stabilized, an uneasy peace temporarily settled over Sino-Japanese relations, and the Nationalists had completed their reorganization of the country’s telecommunications. The Ministry of Communications under Zhu Jiahua received regulatory authority over radio, and the table was set for a vigorous push against illicit foreign broadcasting.⁴⁷

The limits of American radio policy

In 1934, the Chinese asked American consular officials in Hankou to compel R.J. Mueller, a missionary and amateur radio operator, to cease his illegal broadcasts. Amateurs such as Mueller set up transmitters not for profit but out of a love of radio. Their transmissions ranged from messages and commentaries to simple entertainment programming; their broadcasts offered interested listeners a glimpse of life in a distant place. Amateur broadcasting had been popular in the United States since early in the century, and it became fashionable among some Americans (and Chinese) in China by the 1930s.⁴⁸ Mueller, however, lacked a license. The local authorities pointed to treaty obligations that bound American nationals to abide by Chinese radio laws. The Consul General in Hankou, Edwin Stanton, supported the protest. There was “no sound ground on which to object to the demands of the Chinese authorities,” Stanton concluded. He suggested that the American government order Mueller to dismantle his station.⁴⁹

Nelson Johnson, a former State Department Far Eastern Division chief and Assistant Secretary of State who had been serving as the American minister in China since 1929, overruled Stanton. Johnson had never warmed to Chiang’s regime, and his instincts were to support American interests against national statutes. Johnson admitted that a strict reading of the 1929 radio regulations justified the Chinese position, but he argued that China’s signing of an international communications treaty

that same year legitimated Mueller's activities. At American insistence, that treaty had specified an amateur frequency range. Since China's radio law did not specify a license category for amateurs, Johnson argued that so long as Mueller stayed within the amateur frequency range his activities were within the law. Washington supported Johnson's legal acrobatics.⁵⁰

Johnson's logic failed to sway the Chinese, and a local magistrate ordered the missionary's equipment seized. Hankou had lacked a "protective" foreign concession since early 1927, when the Nationalists had skillfully mobilized nationalist agitation against the city's British-controlled enclave during the Northern Expedition. Despite a Nationalist diplomatic offensive that saw two-thirds of the foreign concessions returned to Chinese control by 1934, Johnson was caught off-guard by the actions taken against Mueller. Now on the defensive, the American legation entered into negotiations for the return of Mueller's equipment, and secured an offer to return it in exchange for a promise not to use it.⁵¹

The issue of amateur broadcasting continued to plague Sino-American relations until 1936. Referring to Chinese protests as a "recurring problem," Johnson explained that "[t]he fact remains, however, that there exist in China a great number of amateur radio stations operated by American citizens in various localities in the interior as well as within the international settlements and concessions." The Chinese government, Johnson maintained, "has upon occasion protested their existence and taken such measures as have been possible to suppress them." Rather than respond directly to such protests, Johnson instructed his subordinates to simply say the matter was under consideration. Deliberate procrastination further antagonized Nationalist authorities. "Protracted negotiations... have proved fruitless in removing this abuse of alleged extraterritorial rights," groused Zhu Jiahua about his experiences with foot-dragging diplomats such as Johnson. He lambasted the disregard for Chinese and international law that illicit radio stations denoted. Zhu's priority for China was to claim control over radio, and he insisted that the government act vigorously against violations of Chinese sovereignty. In Zhu's eyes, anybody who operated an unlicensed station in any Chinese territory, regardless of its use, was "violating Chinese law."⁵²

That position had been articulated by Chinese diplomats prior to the Nationalist ascendance and was later echoed by other high-ranking Nationalist authorities. Officially, the Americans accepted this stance, although Johnson's actions in defense of Mueller contradicted that

position.⁵³ From the Chinese perspective, the seizure of equipment such as Mueller's was an effective counter to American recalcitrance, as was the denial of licenses to other American amateur operators.⁵⁴ Johnson, who acted in support of American radio, ultimately did more to damage American amateurs' ability to operate legitimately in China by provoking such countermeasures.

In addition to bungling the amateur broadcasting problem, Johnson misread the security that foreign-controlled Shanghai offered broadcasting. In 1934 the Ministry of Communications requested that American residents of Shanghai abide by the 1929 regulations and register their radio receivers with the Nationalist regime. Shanghai Consul General Edwin Cunningham advised cooperation as the politically prudent course, so long as treaty rights remained intact. He also noted that the British government, demonstrating sensitivity to Chinese nationalism, did not object to the request. But Johnson once again overruled a more cooperative subordinate, and instructed American nationals to be cautioned against abiding by the registration law. Despite the setbacks in the interior, Johnson apparently thought that American radio operators were secure in the foreign-controlled treaty ports.⁵⁵

Developments in Shanghai's broadcasting market should have modified Johnson's view. The foreign-dominated governing authority of Shanghai's International Settlement had also assumed the inviolability of their enclave. Since the 1920s the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) had regulated broadcasting in the Settlement by registering the frequencies used by Settlement broadcasters.⁵⁶ International law, the SMC admitted, actually gave that authority to national governments. Nevertheless, the council adamantly refused to compromise its jealously guarded autonomy by allowing a Chinese regulatory authority to operate in the Settlement. "The Council stands firmly upon the ground that there cannot be two independent authorities exercising administrative control in the settlement over the same subject matter," it declared.⁵⁷ Nationalist desires to regulate Settlement radio were bluntly dismissed when the Council asserted that "it controls the police power in the Settlement and possesses the physical power to prevent officials representing outside authorities from functioning in the Settlement."⁵⁸ The SMC punctuated this point in 1935 when it denied the Ministry of Communications the right to execute a search warrant at an International Settlement address known to operate unlicensed transmitting equipment.⁵⁹

Once again, the Nationalists proved ready to deal with obstinate foreigners. "Foreign radio stations," Zhu Jiahua protested, referring to the

concessions, "are not permitted on Chinese territory, in accordance with the well-established rules of international law." Under Zhu's leadership, the Ministry of Communications aggressively licensed Chinese stations in an attempt to squeeze foreign broadcasters off the air. By 1934 more than fifty-one Chinese broadcasting stations were officially registered in Shanghai. By 1937 China had nearly one hundred stations, Chinese-owned and foreign, more than half of which could be found in Shanghai. The airwaves offered little remaining space for additional foreign broadcasters.⁶⁰

The strategy worked. Some observers simply assumed that the chaos and interference in Shanghai broadcasting resulted from the poor regulation and coordination among Shanghai's various jurisdictions. "During the past few months, interference in Shanghai has grown worse," *Shanghai Calling* editorialized in April 1934. "The European-owned stations, on occasion, [are] completely 'blotted out' by Chinese music or speech from apparently uncontrolled stations."⁶¹ The Shanghai Municipal Council correctly saw more mischievous motives at work. In 1934, after negotiations to bring Settlement broadcasters in line with Chinese laws predictably stalled, the SMC reported increased interference as a result of "the Ministry of Communications...doing all it can to act outside the conversations [with the Council] and force their viewpoint by making it difficult for radio broadcasters."⁶²

James Hutchison, a Shanghai-based employee of an American tobacco company, witnessed this practice in 1931. Hutchison was in charge of scheduling music for the company's tri-weekly radio program. Arriving home and looking forward to a relaxing evening listening to the program he had arranged, Hutchison found his selections of American jazz difficult to hear through frequent interruptions by Chinese falsetto singing. He later learned that the Nationalist government had been intentionally sandwiching foreign stations between two strong Chinese stations to interfere with the foreign stations' signals. Hutchison's station and others like it were early victims of politically motivated jamming.⁶³

Such pressure brought foreign broadcasters into line with Nationalist laws. "Foreign broadcasting stations are compelled to comply with these regulations or go out of business as powerful Chinese stations located outside the settlement and controlled by the Chinese government can easily blot out and in other ways interfere with the broadcasting stations which refuse to comply," lamented Shanghai Municipal Council Chairman H.E. Arnhold to his Tianjin counterpart in early 1936. The council never wavered in its determination to deny the Nationalists regulatory powers in the Settlement. But how could the Settlement

authorities prevent broadcasters from approaching and working with Chinese authorities to ensure uninterrupted broadcasting service, and thereby implicitly acknowledging Chinese authority? In the end, Arnhold indicated that the Shanghai Municipal Council felt it would not be "polite or expedient to attempt to interfere unduly with a situation which is somewhat beyond its practical control."⁶⁴

Foreign concessions and extraterritoriality ultimately provided little protection for radio. Radio broadcasts originating from within a foreign administered territory over Chinese objections had magnified the disturbing dynamic of extraterritoriality and disregard for Chinese law, both prime stimulants of xenophobia and nationalism. Through frequency inundation and jamming, the Nationalists effectively turned radio technology against the International Settlement in order to establish its authority. Shanghai's jurisdictional independence never deterred the Nationalists, who focused on the interdependence of Shanghai's sections. As it had with politically suspect concession newspapers, whose mailing privileges it revoked, and unwelcome foreign business establishments, whose Chinese workers and customers it threatened with arrest outside the concession, the regime effectively challenged radio's Settlement protections. In this respect the Nationalists perhaps enjoyed more success at reining in foreign-controlled radio than they ever did in surmounting the country's deep domestic political divisions to gain effective control over Chinese-controlled mass media.⁶⁵

It was in this climate that Johnson decided to hinder the registration of American-owned receivers. To what end? The general trend was a rollback of the foreign radio presence in China and the acknowledgment (however grudging) of Nationalist control. The British government encouraged its nationals to abide by Chinese registration laws, and many Shanghai broadcasters bowed to the Nationalists' regulatory powers (including a British-owned station that retransmitted Chinese government broadcasts, as required). Yet at that very moment Nelson Johnson assumed a defiant stance and insisted that American nationals be discouraged from abiding by Chinese radio laws. The two American-owned broadcasting stations in Shanghai mirrored Johnson's obstructionist attitude and disregarded Nationalist regulations mandating the evening retransmission of official broadcasts; one went so far as to submit a bill to the Chinese government demanding payment for lost advertising revenues as a condition of proceeding with the retransmissions. One wonders why the top exporter of radio equipment to China would alienate such a customer. Perhaps a different American approach might have avoided creating the "mild sensation" (in the words of one

US official) that followed the Nationalists' June 1937 purchase of one of those American stations at Shanghai; aggressive Nationalist practices forced it out of business.⁶⁶

American broadcasting policy provoked Chinese hostility. As far back as W.A. Estes' original 1925 query, Americans sought to expand the US radio presence in China without regard to Chinese regulations or sentiments. This deeply antagonized Chinese nationalism and provoked hostile official reactions. Of course, considering the rising nationalism of the 1930s and the historic connections between communications and imperialism, American radio certainly presented a vulnerable target, regardless of American attitudes. Nonetheless, a more sympathetic approach might have allowed for some accommodation between China and the United States on this question. American policy never grasped the fact that China indeed had a new national government committed to rolling back the foreign power and privilege that radio had come to symbolize.

* * *

The American approach to broadcasting in China during the 1920s and 1930s speaks to two related historical problems in Sino-American relations. First, it highlights the difficulties Americans in interwar China had in seeing beyond their own developmental models. Second, it underscores the failure of these same Americans to acknowledge the growing strength of Chinese nationalism. Nationalist diplomacy succeeded in regaining control over maritime customs, postal communications, tariffs, the salt monopoly, and the majority of foreign concessions – all longtime symbols of imperialism – by the early 1930s. On the matter of radio, Sino-American relations demonstrated Americans' indifference to China's determination to control its destiny, despite the convincing evidence of that determination and effectiveness in realizing those goals.⁶⁷

Consular evaluations of Chinese radio in the 1920s were based on the belief that a technology will develop along American lines. Culturally based assumptions discouraged an informed and thoughtful analysis of the ways in which technology and society interact in a cross-cultural context. The effective Chinese assault on American broadcasting in the 1930s was the consequence of that disregard and another example of Sino-American radio serving as a vehicle for conflict rather than cooperation. The American misreading of radio technology's place in the wider Chinese context proved counterproductive to American aspirations to establish a stronger presence in the emerging Chinese broadcasting market.

4

“As If We Lived on Maine St. in Kansas, USA”: Shortwave Broadcasting and American Mass Media in Wartime China

The morning of February 19, 1939 was thrilling for Addie Viola Smith. “AN ECSTATIC MOMENT,” she exclaimed, describing her feelings at precisely 8:00 am on that chilly Sunday morning. “From this time onward to 11:30 am... [my] apartment hummed with excitement and incessant telephone rings brought in observers’ reports from various parts of the city, telling of glad tidings.” Smith, the long-serving American Trade Commissioner for Shanghai, was referring to the very first broadcasts of W6XBE, a California-based shortwave station established to broadcast American radio programming to China. “W6XBE came in...as clear as a local station in many parts of Shanghai, and very good in buildings noted for poor reception,” Smith reported.¹ For four years, Smith lobbied for just such a station. Smith, like many other Americans, believed that international radio could serve as a vehicle for beneficial cross-cultural and economic exchanges across international borders. From this vantage point, W6XBE’s inaugural broadcast presumably heralded the beginning of a new era in American-East Asian relations.

Those expectations were unrealistic. From the beginning, W6XBE’s programming reflected American commercial broadcasting practices and targeted a distinctly American audience. Consequently, Americans living in China and throughout the Asia-Pacific region became the station’s most dedicated listeners. These Americans used W6XBE to maintain a sense of connection to their distant homeland. In so doing, W6XBE joined other American communications media such as postal correspondence, newspapers, magazines, movies, photographs, and

phonograph records that served a similar purpose. Reliable international postal, rail, and shipping networks allowed friends and family to keep in touch and travel across the Pacific. W6XBE became part of this wider American media and communications milieu that had long been intertwined with the lives of Americans living in China. These Americans were determined to maintain the bond they had with the friends, family, and lifestyle that they left behind in the far-off United States. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the uncertainty it imposed on the lives of the Americans living through it further intensified that determination to remain connected to home. Seen in this light, W6XBE was never a vehicle of cross-cultural exchange designed to promote international understanding. The station became first and foremost a tool for Americans living abroad to strengthen their connections to a distant American society and, by extension, their individual senses of American national identity.

This intersection between international radio and national identity speaks to Benedict Anderson's now ubiquitous concept of an "imagined national community." Focusing particularly on mass circulation newspapers, Anderson makes the case that modern forms of national identity and nationalism emerged from a people's engagement with their country's mass media. The nation, he argues, was an "imagined community" to the extent that the vast majority of so-called citizens never actually met one another, but understood that millions of unseen fellow citizens encountered the same information through mass circulation newspapers. Moreover, these fellow readers and compatriots came to understand that they shared intangible connections based on speaking the same language, answering to the same political authority, and sharing comparable values and experiences. Historians exploring the connections between national identity and mass communications have since applied Anderson's framework to analyses of national postal systems, the telegraph, television, the Internet, and – of course – radio.²

According to radio historian Susan Douglas, radio broadcasting is particularly well-suited to fostering that "imagined" sense of a national community. American domestic broadcasting, Douglas writes, cultivated "a sense of national communion ... on entirely new geographic, temporal, and cognitive levels, inflating people's desire to seek out, build on, and make more concrete the notion of the nation." US broadcasting, Douglas argues, conveyed a common voice to a mass audience, all of whom were cognitively aware that millions of unseen fellow Americans with comparable interests and values heard that same voice at that exact same moment in time. Within the context of that simultaneous

mass listening experience, the conversational style and the use of studio audiences by many popular programs further fostered a sense of familiarity, intimacy, and connection among otherwise anonymous listeners, to both the performers and to each other. Furthermore, the cognitive dimensions of radio listening propel listeners to create powerful visual images within their minds to accompany the disembodied voice that emerges from the loudspeaker. This imagery can be so powerful that the stimuli of a particular song or program heard previously will, when heard again, create the sensation within a nostalgic listener of being transported to an earlier time or place. These overall dynamics of broadcasting, according to Douglas, "outstripped anything the newspaper had been able to do in terms of nation building on a psychic imaginative level."³

With a programming slate rooted in US domestic broadcasting practices, W6XBE extended the dynamics of American national identity formation into the international arena. W6XBE found its niche within in the existing international communications networks that kept Americans connected to home while living abroad. W6XBE offered an unrivaled opportunity to pursue, develop, and solidify connections to the American nation and strengthen conceptualizations of American identity thousands of miles from home. With its array of American entertainment and news programming, W6XBE helped minimize in the minds of American listeners the significance of the large geographic divide that separated them from United States. Devoted American listeners in China and elsewhere in the Pacific region consistently used W6XBE to reinforce an indefatigable sense of being an "American" while living abroad. To a listener living in a war-torn China, the sense of connection, familiarity, and comfort that W6XBE provided was often incalculable. Instead of fostering international exchange, it was these more parochial pressures that defined W6XBE's significance in the international arena. "Radio," trumpeted a 1931 *Journal of Economics* article, "is an extension of the home."⁴ That statement precisely captures how W6XBE ultimately fit into the broader framework of American-East Asian relations.

The myth of radio cosmopolitanism

The California-born Viola Smith was a key player in a four-year effort to establish W6XBE. Smith, the Commerce Department's first female foreign service officer, arrived in China in 1920 as a twenty-seven year old clerk assigned to the Shanghai Trade Office. Smith, who earned a law



Figure 4.1 A. Viola Smith and the Shanghai Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, c. 1930s (US National Archives, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce Still Pictures Collection)

degree from the Washington College of Law, received a promotion to Assistant Trade Commissioner in 1922 and to full Trade Commissioner in 1928. As Trade Commissioner, one of her central responsibilities was to identify economic opportunities for American businesses. In 1935, she set her sights on radio. “I feel certain,” Smith appealed to Washington, “that radio interests and listeners in China, especially in Shanghai, would welcome the institution of a special directionally beamed program from the United States.”⁵

When Viola Smith petitioned for shortwave broadcasting to China during the latter part of 1930s, American broadcasting had nearly two decades of domestic development behind it. During the 1920s, a corporation-friendly regulatory framework helped American radio develop into a national network-based and advertising-supported broadcasting system dominated by NBC and its rival, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). With advertising dollars financing the system, popular programs spoke to the shared symbols and values familiar

to the white middle class, the group with the largest purchasing power in interwar America. Americans from coast to coast within this cross-section of society listened to these programs, knew that millions of other unseen listeners did the same, and understood that they all did so because of the common interests and values they shared. Corporate broadcasters touted this profit-seeking and advertising-supported commercial broadcasting system as a truly “American” model for radio.⁶ Viola Smith believed Asia-based Americans, embedded within an American cultural context abroad, wanted to engage with this commercial radio programming.

In truth, when Smith made her initial pitch in 1935, American radio regulations technically prohibited broadcasters from selling advertising to support shortwave programming. Uncertainty about its technical properties led the medium to be designated as “experimental.” The intent of the advertising prohibition, imposed in the 1920s, was to forestall commercial exploitation of the shortwaves until its technical characteristics were better understood. Shortwave broadcasts achieved phenomenal transmission ranges of several thousand miles using only a fraction of the power (and, by extension, the costs) of long- and medium-wave broadcasts with significantly less range. In practice, the prohibition mattered little. Absent the incentive of advertising, the challenge was getting US commercial broadcasters to experiment with shortwave broadcasting, since they were the American radio interests best positioned to develop that understanding. A loophole, therefore, permitted the *rebroadcast* of existing domestic programs, which had the advertising built into the scripts and often into the program titles themselves. The gambit worked. Corporate powerhouses such as General Electric (NBC’s parent company) dove into shortwave broadcasting, and by the 1930s radio engineers had begun to understand that shortwave signals achieved their impressive range by relaying off the Earth’s ionosphere and reappearing thousands of miles from their source, unlike the long- and medium-wave transmissions that traveled along the curvature of the globe. For broadcasters such as GE, who were anxious to hold a place on the spectrum until the FCC might remove its restrictions on advertising and intrigued by the cost-effectiveness of the medium, the rebroadcast of existing domestic programming abroad made practical and economic sense.⁷

The problem, in Smith’s eyes, was that all the US-based shortwave stations were located near the American east coast. Even with shortwave radio’s impressive transmission range, those broadcasts still struggled to reach Asia. The United States, Smith argued, should have a west coast

station. Smith underscored the potential market of Americans living throughout China, including an estimated 12,000 in Shanghai alone. These Americans included businessmen, merchants, bankers, and industrialists capitalizing on Shanghai's lucrative economic climate. Americans in Shanghai also included sojourning doctors, engineers, lawyers, newspaper publishers, journalists, teachers, shopkeepers, real estate developers and agents, entertainers, public utilities operators, and insurance agents that provided essential services to Shanghai's foreign population. There was also the American missionary community in Shanghai and throughout China that worked to convert the Chinese to Christianity.⁸ This disparate but culturally bonded group of expatriates, the Trade Commissioner claimed, offered an excellent market for broadcasts from America.⁹

Smith, who was respected in Washington for her data and information gathering skills, relentlessly built her case. Smith already commanded significant attention as the Commerce Department's first female foreign service officer and managed to achieve this professional respect despite the gender prejudice she at times encountered. Consequently, her efforts to bring American shortwave broadcasting to China promised to capture Washington's attention. Smith and other Americans in Shanghai kept radio reception logs, which Smith collected and forwarded to Washington to demonstrate how pathetic and irregular shortwave reception from the US actually was. Smith highlighted fruitless efforts in early 1937 to hear Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration speech and a highly anticipated Metropolitan Opera broadcast. She cited local station owners who pledged to rebroadcast west coast shortwave transmissions over their local frequencies to reach an even larger audience.¹⁰ Had the experiences of Margaret and Elizabeth Rue come to her attention, Smith no doubt would have also cited them as convincing evidence to support her petitioning. Margaret Rue purchased a shortwave radio in 1937 shortly after her arrival in China following a furlough in the United States. The sisters quickly discovered the difficulties of hearing American broadcasts, but nonetheless expressed delight when through the interference they heard a plug for Kellogg's Rice Crispies cereal.¹¹ Even without specific knowledge of the Rue's travails, Smith never doubted the desirability of constructing a shortwave transmitter on the American west coast to assure improved access to American programming.

Heralding the potential of that eager American audience, however, only constituted the beginning of Smith's case. The Trade Commissioner subsequently identified the substantive economic benefits that promised

to follow American broadcasts to China. Sales of American-made receivers in China would rise with regular broadcasts from the US, she argued. Sales of American products promoted in corporate-sponsored programs would also jump. More importantly, these sales increases would not be dependent on American listeners alone. Radio, Smith maintained, was an entry point into the elusive China market. "While China's 400 million population is eighty per-cent illiterate," she wrote, "the fact should not be lost sight of that her literate population approximates 80 million people, constituting the higher group of purchasing power." According to Smith, these Chinese usually had a good command of English, were often educated in American universities, and, she believed, would prove receptive to American radio and the products it promoted. "They are eager to keep abreast with developments in the United States and would be ready radio listeners to American programs were they available," the Trade Commissioner concluded.¹²

This vision of a large Chinese audience for American broadcasts pushed Smith toward even grander predictions. "It would be an excellent thing for American Chinese relationships," Smith insisted in 1935. Shortwave broadcasting to China would ensure "that the cultural, political, and economic thought and background of American life and ideals may go direct," Smith told the National Foreign Trade Association in 1936. As essential participants in what Smith referred to as the "American Economic Mission," she implored her audience to recognize the significance of using international broadcasting "to stimulate American-Chinese friendship and to promote American trade generally." Smith also forwarded to Washington the Shanghai American Chamber of Commerce's conviction that consistent American shortwave broadcasts to Asia would "promote friendship and understanding between American and Pacific neighbors."¹³

This "radio cosmopolitanism" was a popular refrain of the day. Like radiotelegraphy before it, broadcasting was merely the latest communications medium to fall prey to such over-exuberant predictions. A single program, the argument went, could impart its cultural, political, social, and economic influences on its diverse audience. Smith's embrace of "radio cosmopolitanism" made perfect sense. She lived within a self-proclaimed "cosmopolitan" American community in Shanghai. This community promoted numerous cross-cultural endeavors and "bridges of understanding" like social clubs as a means for Chinese and Americans to become familiar and friendly – and, perhaps most importantly, do business – with one another. Good intentions notwithstanding, this allegedly cosmopolitan community still remained quite

parochial due to its extraterritorial privileges and persistent social segregation. To journalist Edgar Snow, the Americans in Shanghai were “100 percenters,” referring to the degree to which these so-called cosmopolitans actually discouraged cultural exchanges and vigorously clung to their American identities.¹⁴

Smith’s exaggerations aside, her familiar arguments about international broadcasting’s potential resonated with General Electric’s shortwave broadcasting division. The company quoted Smith and her cosmopolitan rationale in its 1937 application seeking FCC approval to build a west coast shortwave station. That November, the FCC, which had also heard complaints from other Americans in East Asia seeking better shortwave reception, approved the application. The company subsequently built W6XBE in San Francisco Bay. The station secured rights from NBC to rebroadcast the American radio network’s domestic programming. And as W6XBE began broadcasting in 1939, the FCC fortuitously removed all advertising restrictions imposed on shortwave transmissions while mandating power and equipment upgrades to enhance international reception. NBC reacted quickly by securing international advertising contracts from, among others, Firestone, Alka-Seltzer, Johnson Wax, and Camel cigarettes.¹⁵

The energized Smith spared no effort preparing for the launch of the station in February. She peppered the local Chinese- and English-language papers with press releases, publicized advance copies of the station’s schedule, and persuaded local radio stations to announce the arrival of the service. Smith even monitored the station’s test transmissions that preceded its formal launch, and sent reports back to the US on its reception quality. The American-owned *China Weekly Review* lauded Smith for her role in helping make the station a reality and invited readers to send their feedback directly to the Trade Commissioner. Viola Smith, the article noted, “will welcome receiving from radio fans in China reception logs of this new station and their suggestions and comments for improvement.”¹⁶

In Smith’s view, that early feedback mandated improvements. Reception was fine, as the station reached much of China. Program quality, however, left something to be desired. “The program content on each evening,” Smith lamented a month into the broadcasts, “was disappointingly mediocre and far less interesting than many of the South American programs.” She believed part of the problem was that GE transmitted evening broadcasts to Asia between 4:00am and 7:00am Pacific time. Smith’s cognizance that her evening hours in Shanghai corresponded to the early morning hours across the Pacific underscores

a significant psychological dimension surrounding new long-distance and instantaneous communications technologies: notions of simultaneity across long distances, and a sense of what historian Stephen Kern referred to as a “vast extended present.” In this case, Smith surmised that during those inconvenient hours on the other side of the ocean, station operators relied on pre-recorded programs of low quality. “‘Swing’ musical transcriptions as a rule fall flat,” she noted. “[I]f W6XBE has to rely upon electrical transcriptions, can they not be something worth while, rather than the insipid musical numbers which are now being played?,” she inquired, perhaps referring to those “swing” transcriptions she so despised.¹⁷

Smith, in fact, wanted a station more distinctly American. “[W]hat is needed badly,” Smith opined, “are broadcasts from W6XBE which will give succinct resumes of important American happenings and events, to be given by prominent persons identified with *American* governmental, commercial, financial, and cultural life; and by well-known radio commentators such as Lowell Thomas and others.” She believed that “broadcasts of Carnegie Hall concerts, symphony orchestras, military bands, and similar items would be welcomed.” Both American and US-educated Chinese listeners, Smith presumed, would be interested in listening to American sporting events. “Lectures on well-chosen subjects by leaders in the profession or industry are most needed as there is a dearth of such features in China,” she insisted in language that suggested a reformist bent to her motives. Entertainment programming, however, was at least as important as any educational fare. “Humorous programs such as ‘Charlie McCarthy,’ ‘Amos & Andy,’ and items of ‘Hollywood Chit-chat,’ “ Smith allowed, “would be acceptable in well balanced programs.”¹⁸ In Smith’s view, one major adjustment in W6XBE’s evening broadcasts to China might accomplish her goals. “Is it not possible,” she asked “for W6XBE to broadcast during these hours transcriptions of outstanding NBC programs, which may be given the day before in Pacific Coast cities or elsewhere?”¹⁹

This adjustment promised to place W6XBE explicitly within the existing American media and communications milieu that already extended into China. The rise of the press wire services, facilitated by international telegraphy, enabled China-based American newspapers such as *The China Press*, *The China Weekly Review*, and the *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* to keep their American readership informed about the events dominating the headlines in the United States. On February 19, 1939, the same day that W6XBE began broadcasting, Shanghai’s *China Press* reported that Franklin Roosevelt planned to address the opening of a widely publicized international fair in San Francisco via radio from Key West Florida. Another story quoted

Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles expressing reservations about extending US recognition to Francisco Franco's new regime in Spain. Editorials and political cartoons from prominent illustrators and major papers such as the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* were regularly reprinted in these China-based papers. These newspapers highlighted the variety of Western and especially American holidays – such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, and even George Washington's birthday. Like their American counterparts, these newspapers published specialized sections on sports, business, arts and entertainment, women's interests, and movies. Readers could even follow the daily adventures of “Mutt and Jeff,” “Charlie Chan,” or any of the other characters in the syndicated comic strips published in China (see Figure 4.2). In the spirit of misplaced optimism and unmet expectations, the sports section from the *China Press*’ March 9, 1939 edition carried an article touting the bold moves the Chicago Cubs had made going into that year’s spring training. The Cubs, anxious

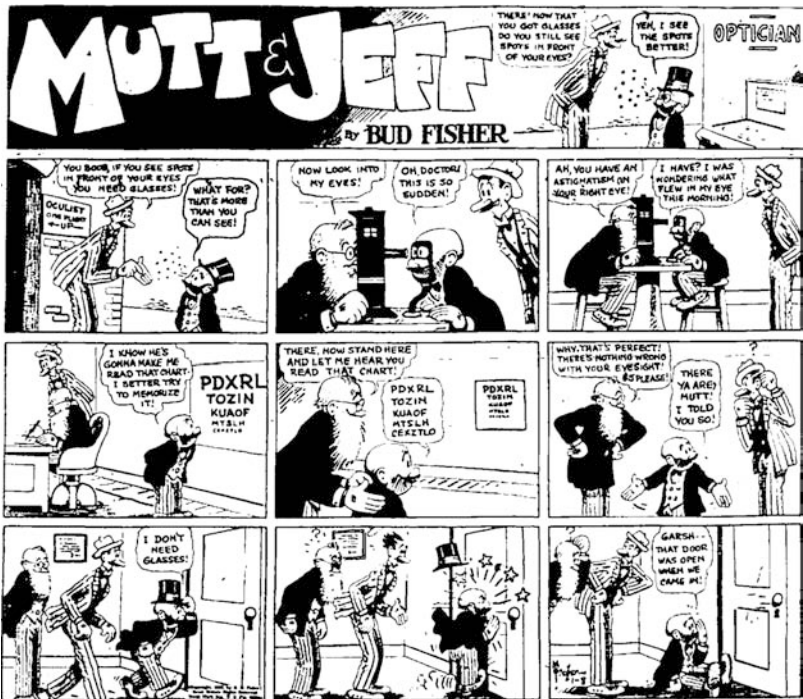


Figure 4.2 Mutt and Jeff cartoon (*China Press*, 19 February 1939; Copyright Universal Uclick. Used With Permission)

to overcome an intolerable championship drought of nearly twenty years, had positioned themselves to win their first World Series since 1908, the *Press* informed its readers (alas, that drought was destined to surpass the century mark).²⁰

Movies comprised another component of the American media milieu into which W6XBE fit. Eighty-four percent of all the films shown in China during 1936 were English-language movies, 81 percent of which had been imported from the United States. American films playing in Shanghai during W6XBE's inaugural broadcast on February 19, 1939 included Jimmy Stewart's *You Can't Take It with You*, Errol Flynn's *Robin Hood* and *The Dawn Patrol*, and Laurel and Hardy's *Swiss Miss*. The newspapers advertised these films and their schedules as any US-based paper would. The promotion for Claudette Colbert's *Zaza* promised showings of a Paramount newsreel and a *Betty Boop* cartoon before the main feature. There was also an extensive advertising campaign tying the new Douglas Fairbanks movie *Young in Heart* to a variety of popular consumer products – such as Zenith radios, Hennessy Brandy, and Dr. Ludwig's Alca Table Water – all of which promised to keep the user “young in heart.”²¹

The wider fabric of American advertising reaching China was yet another dimension of the American media milieu. A reader perusing the *China Press* during W6XBE's inaugural weekend of February 18 and 19 found advertisements for Coca-Cola, Zenith radios, Ovaltine, Champion sparkplugs, and Daggett & Ramsdell facial creams. A British company marketed a facial powder as “Snow White Powder” in an ad that included Disney's Seven Dwarves; the copy promised that anyone who used the powder would “be as lovely as Snow White.” A Ford ad appeared on the back cover of the February 19, 1939 edition of the American-owned *China Weekly Review*, but might have just as plausibly have appeared in *Time*, promising “added beauty,” “easier handling,” and “quieter operation” from the new 1936 V-8 model available from Shanghai dealers.²²

These ads often adopted a familiar American copywriting style that emphasized how a particular product or service could help the consumer cope with the stress and challenges of the modern world. The Shanghai Telephone Company promised “Security, Efficiency, Reliability, Value, Insurance, Convenience, [and] Economy” (or “Service” for short). Like their US counterparts, other ads wove in popularly accepted assumptions about gender roles into their copy. “Dr. Williams' Pink Pills” depicted a balding, middle-aged white businessman relaxing in a comfortable chair with a cigarette and a newspaper. His relaxed demeanor underscored

the Pink Pills' promise to remedy "worn-out, nervous, [and] depressed" feelings, as well as the "palpitation, indigestion, [and] dizzy attacks" that resulted from "blood impoverishment." The same company also pitched "Baby's Own Tablets," which promised to make modern mothering easier. This ad pictured a happy middle-class white woman cooing over her adorable smiling baby, a baby that had just been "cross, sleepless" and "whining," as well as plagued by "colic" and "bad breath." The pills promised to cure those common infant afflictions because they "stimulate the liver, cleanse the kidneys, and exercise the intestines," which in turn promised to eliminate the "excess bile" and "intestinal poisons" that "upset digestion and irritate the nerves."²³ The Shanghai Gas Company, owned in part by American interests, also pitched its products to modern women living hassled lives, married and single alike. "Breakfast is never late thanks to my new gas cooker," reads one ad picturing a "bachelor girl" working over the stove. "The housewife who likes to do her own cooking does it with a gas stove," says another Shanghai Gas ad. These advertisements – variously depicting technological efficiency, relaxed businessmen, nurturing mothers with happy babies, and women merrily cooking over the kitchen stove – presented an idealized conceptualization of a white American social world typical for advertising content in the United States that had found its way into American publications in China as well.²⁴ (See Figures 4.3 through 4.7)

Extensive long distant transportation and telecommunications networks added yet another element to the American media context that surrounded Americans living in China during the late 1930s. International and domestic telegraphy networks facilitated rapid communication across land and ocean that kept diplomats, missionaries, and other travelers in much more steady contact with distant family, friends, and superiors than had ever been the case. Diplomats and missionaries took advantage of reliable international and intra-national rail, shipping, and other transportation networks to take regularly scheduled trips home during their long tours of duty. In between trips home, family, friends, and associates separated by thousands of miles exchanged letters and packages. That luxury owed its existence in large part to the creation of a reliable international postal service, forged through multinational agreements and reliant on those international and intra-national transportation networks that crisscrossed the globe. Equally important, the postal service extended well into China by the 1930s. In 1914, China joined the International Postal Union, the international agency that oversaw the functioning of this global network. The number of post offices throughout China expanded from

You have them all in **ONE** word

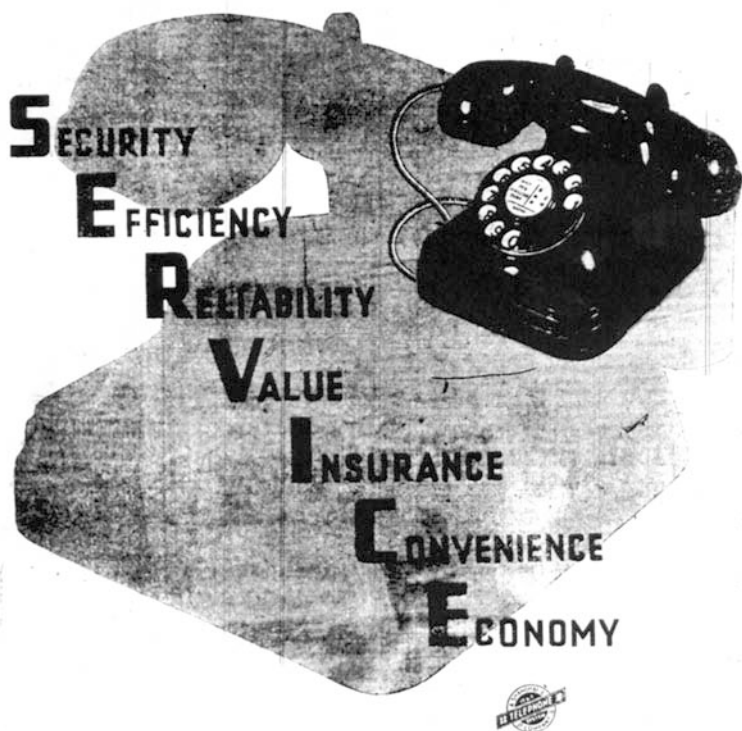


Figure 4.3 Advertisement for the Shanghai Telephone Company (*China Press*, 23 February 1939)

only 446 in 1902 to nearly 12,700 by 1932. This expanding postal service allowed Americans living throughout China to receive letters, consumer items, newspapers, and periodicals from abroad. Shanghai-based publications such as the *China Press* and the *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* also enjoyed increased circulation in China's interior as a result of this expanding postal system. No wonder journalist Edgar

What Of Your Later Years?

When you reach the age for retirement you want to be able to enjoy your leisure and not to be continually suffering from ailments of one kind or another. Yet many men and women have their later years spoiled through persistent ill health.

Blood impoverishment is often the basic cause of such suffering. The passing years make more and more demands upon the blood, consequently the only way to preserve health is to maintain a rich, red, plentiful supply of blood.



If you are feeling worn out, nervous, depressed; have palpitation, indigestion, dizzy attacks, pains in body or limbs, look to the condition of your blood. A course of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills is what you need to

build up your blood

thereby revitalizing the nerves, strengthening the digestive organs, and toning up the whole system.

Many men and women well past the prime of life have derived great benefit from taking Dr. Williams' Pink Pills; why should not you? Remember they are no quack remedy but the prescription of a British physician, an M.D. of Edinburgh University, and begin a course of them to-day. They are obtainable at all chemists.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills.

Figure 4.4 Advertisement for Dr. Williams' Pink Pills (*China Weekly Review*, 11 January 1936)

Snow mocked the self-defined cosmopolitans of the American community. It was very easy to remain a "100 percenter" with these options at one's disposal.²⁵

Viola Smith's efforts to improve the initially disappointing W6XBE through the broadcast of better American programming must be related to the American media and communications milieu that surrounded her. Smith's ideas expose the contradictions inherent in her vision of "radio cosmopolitanism." On the one hand, like most of her contemporaries Smith genuinely believed that radio would encourage mutually beneficial international cultural exchanges. On the other hand, her



Cross Yesterday . . . Happy To-day

And For A Very Good Reason.

Yesterday a whining, peevish baby; didn't want to play, didn't want to eat. To-day bubbling over with happiness and hungry for his meals. This is the experience of many a mother who uses Baby's Own Tablets to correct the little health troubles of her child.

How do the tablets work? They simply remove the excess bile and the intestinal poisons which upset digestion, and irritate the nerves. Baby's Own Tablets are much more effective than ordinary laxatives or powders. They have a three-fold action—they stimulate the liver, cleanse the kidneys, and exercise the intestines. . . . And what is most important they are entirely free from narcotics.

Baby's Own Tablets are easy to administer, because they taste nice, and, being in tablet form, accuracy of dosage is assured.

The next time your baby is cross, sleepless, does not want his food, has coated tongue, bad breath, suffers from colic, constipation, teething troubles, give him Baby's Own Tablets and see what a difference they will make.

Baby's Own Tablets.

Figure 4.5 Advertisement for Baby's Own Tablets (*China Weekly Review*, 22 February 1936)

specific programming requests for and critiques of W6XBE were parochially American. Could a station whose cornerstone programs included *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Charlie McCarthy* (as she had explicitly requested) really improve international friendships and economic exchanges (as she explicitly claimed)?

This question is not meant to suggest that American media content cannot have cross-cultural appeal, for such a claim would be patently false. However, examples of American media products gaining international audiences generally demonstrate how some particular content engaged its non-American audience in a way that related to that non-American

THE HOUSEWIFE WHO LIKES TO DO HER OWN COOKING



DOES IT WITH A GAS COOKER

"Mrs. Roosevelt has a private kitchen adjoining her bedroom in the White House, containing, in miniature, a GAS STOVE, a sink and a refrigerator. There are shelves for dishes; pots and pans hang against the wall; in the drawers are towels, knives and forks. The First Lady likes to cook, and here she can do so without interference from a corps of servants."

George Abell and Evelyn Gordon: "Let Them Eat Caviar"

SHANGHAI GAS COMPANY, LTD.

(Incorporated in Hongkong)

Head Office:—656 Yu Ya Ching Road Telephone 93333
Showrooms:—709 Hubbling Well Road Telephone 38093
891 North Szechuen Road Telephone 45435



Figure 4.6 Advertisement for the Shanghai Gas Company (*China Press*, 22 February 1939)

audiences' values, norms, and outlooks (often in unexpected and unintended ways).²⁶ English-language radio programs broadcast to a country overwhelmingly lacking in speakers of the language are not the type of media vehicle designed to gain that traction, and the relatively small amount of US-educated and English-speaking Chinese that Smith did consider were unlikely to be sufficient in numbers to make a difference.

Contradictions aside, Viola Smith's mindset was well within the mainstream of the US diplomatic profession. Since the 1890s, the US government encouraged the export of American entertainment, philanthropy, and telecommunications to new foreign markets. This "liberal developmentalist" strategy (to use Emily Rosenberg's terminology) sought to create a transnational environment of shared culture and values based on American norms, which could help promote US political and economic interests abroad. The US self-interest notwithstanding, this liberal developmentalist strategy also maintained that the foreign

A 'BACHELOR' GIRL SAYS

**"BREAKFAST IS NEVER LATE,
THANKS TO MY NEW GAS COOKER"**



**INDEPENDENT TESTS HAVE PROVED THAT COOKING BY GAS
IS CONSIDERABLY FASTER THAN BY ANY OTHER METHOD.**

Visit our showrooms for a practical demonstration

SHANGHAI GAS COMPANY, LTD.

(Incorporated in Hongkong)

Head Office:—656 Yu Ya Ching Road	Telephone 93333
Showrooms:—709 Bubbling Well Road	Telephone 38093
891 North Szechuen Road	Telephone 45435



Figure 4.7 Advertisement for the Shanghai Gas Company (*China Press*, 28 February 1939)

peoples who embraced positive American influences with presumably universal appeal would enjoy improved lives in their own right.²⁷ And yet, as Michael Hunt argues in his synthesis of US foreign relations history, presuming the superiority of American values risked the pursuit of foreign policies toward non-Western countries that were poorly equipped to deal with the world's complexities.²⁸ The idea that W6XBE might itself serve some broader "liberal developmentalist" purpose *precisely because* of a programming line-up that appealed first and foremost to American listeners captures this myopia that could inform American foreign policy. That a more "American" W6XBE might simply enable its listeners to retreat further into an American media cocoon apparently escaped notice.

Still, the station ultimately made the requested adjustments to become more "American." As criticisms of W6XBE's programming

mounted, NBC Vice President Frank Mason addressed the issue. “[W]e have gone through a great deal of trouble and expense in planning special material for the Far East audience,” he assured Smith’s superiors in Washington.²⁹ The delighted Shanghai Trade Commissioner soon reported that the programming preferences of Americans living in her city mirrored domestic American favorites. The schedule now included popular programs such as *Sherlock Holmes*, *One Man’s Family*, *Charlie McCarthy*, and *Carnegie Hall Symphony Concerts*, as well as weekend college football and rebroadcasts of presidential speeches. One of the most popular shows Smith singled out was the *Sunday Mailbag*. During this program, the host read the letters written by stateside Americans addressed to friends and family members living abroad. W6XBE had firmly situated itself in the wider American media milieu by the end of 1939. The fact that China and Japan had been waging war throughout 1939 (indeed, since 1937) did not stop Smith from praising W6XBE’s arrival in China as the “outstanding event of the year.”³⁰

Americans and American broadcasting in China

Many of W6XBE’s new listeners no doubt agreed with Smith’s assessment of the station’s significance. Their motivations for listening, however, fell considerably short of the high-minded cosmopolitan rationalizations that Viola Smith had used to justify the station’s establishment since the mid-1930s. One anonymous self-identified American who lacked a shortwave receiver complained that the new station did not reach enough Americans like him because no local station was simulcasting it. “There is a great need here for a 100-percent American broadcasting station to receive and re-broadcast these and other American programs,” he wrote to the American *China Weekly Review*. “I am convinced,” this writer continued, “that a majority of Americans here and elsewhere in China would be willing to tax themselves, voluntarily, for the support of such a station.” The idea hit a chord. When such arrangements were not made, this suggestion was repeated in two *China Weekly Review* editorials a few months later.³¹

Those who heard the station’s improved line-up were effusive in their praise. “Your broadcasts... [are] most popular with all English speaking listeners,” wrote one appreciative correspondent. Vincent Morrison, a Catholic missionary in Zhejiang and a former San Francisco area resident forwarded his compliments to GE for its ability to “furnish us with splendid entertainment.” Some listeners discovered W6XBE’s programs

quite unexpectedly. "Last evening April 15th... we accidentally tuned in on your station," missionary W.M. Burnside wrote to GE in April 1939. "I have been trying to get something from America for several years," the Hong Kong-based American explained, "and this is the first time." W6XBE offered Burnside an emotional connection to his unseen compatriots on the other side of the Pacific. "I am an American," he wrote, "so naturally, I am proud to hear something direct from there."³²

Considering W6XBE's expansive reach, it is not surprising that praise arrived from well beyond China. "Just a line to show my appreciation of your programs," wrote a grateful listener in British North Borneo.³³ Other letters of gratitude came in from Singapore, the Philippines, and Hawaii – as well as one from as far as South Africa. Adele Williams, the wife of Frank Williams, the Commercial Attaché in Tokyo, even felt compelled to write in 1939. Her comments better than most underscore the irrelevance of high-minded radio cosmopolitanism to the actual listening experience. "Let me assure you that to have broadcasts from America is nothing short of a God send and we are all more than grateful for the privilege," she wrote. That said, a better recording of the Star Spangled Banner might be obtained, she suggested. "I have never heard [it] ... played worse than it is on [your station]." Williams was even more disappointed that, in her opinion, the most interesting programs were broadcast over the Latin American beam. The radio announcer, much to Williams' consternation, introduced these English-language programs by only speaking in Spanish. While the Spanish language broadcasts point to more deliberate efforts to reach and influence Spanish-speaking listeners in the Western Hemisphere, station programmers exerted no such efforts in their programs directed to East Asia.³⁴ Not that this discrepancy bothered Adele Williams. Her concern lay entirely with the use of the English language. "We in the Far East number so many real Americans," she complained, "and it is such a good time for us to tune in that whatever is announced in Spanish should immediately be translated into English."³⁵

Missionary surgeon and California native Velva Brown shared Williams' enthusiasm, if not her particular criticisms, about the American broadcasts to China. The superintendent of the Scott Thresher Memorial Hospital in Shantou purchased her radio in 1936, well before W6XBE's launch. She quickly became frustrated at her inability to receive American stations. Her Pilot brand radio – an American model, just as Viola Smith hoped – was the first in the compound and by 1938 there were a total of four. "We are advancing," Brown quipped. Yet without a west coast shortwave station, those radios proved to be



Figure 4.8 Velva Brown, 1935 (Courtesy of Roselyn Leibowitz)

of little use in picking up American broadcasts, unless the busy doctor wanted to stay up until 3:00am when long distance reception was best. "I could hear all the world except America," she complained in one 1938 letter home.³⁶

Brown's presence in China reflected the social gospel emphasis of the American missionary movement by the 1930s. Limited in their ability to win Chinese converts, in the early twentieth-century American missionaries moved away from relying on evangelical proselytizing and toward implementing educational, medical, and agricultural reforms for the poorest Chinese. Practitioners of the social gospel hoped that conversions to Christianity would follow their earnest efforts to improve

the lives of China's impoverished. The social gospel arose out of the late nineteenth-century progressive movement, and shared its beneficent aims, its trust in technical experts, and its faith in education to tackle modern society's growing problems.³⁷ Brown, a Christian doctor committed to helping impoverished Chinese through her hospital work, embodied the intertwined impulses of the social gospel and American progressivism.

The practical value of Brown's medical work increased dramatically with the July 1937 outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Since coming to power in 1927, Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government had struggled to balance state-building objectives against expanding Japanese imperialism. Chiang's regime could not succeed in building a viable state and government if its challenges to Japanese policies resulted in devastating military counterstrikes that China could not withstand. It was this logic that led to the Chinese forfeiture of Manchuria without a fight. Meanwhile, the devastating "Shanghai War of 1932" that erupted in the shadow of the Manchurian Incident underscored just how vulnerable China was in the face of Japan's superior military power. However, the alternative of allowing Japan to continue to peel away Chinese territory and sovereignty was little better. Not only were Nationalist state-building policies undermined with the loss of control over some of China's most valuable territories, but Chiang Kai-shek's popularity and consequent ability to govern also dramatically suffered. Chiang was impressed with the necessity of changing course when he was kidnapped and nearly assassinated in December 1936 at the hands of Manchuria's former warlord and one-time ally, Zhang Xueliang, who was reacting to Chiang's continued refusal to oppose Japan more vigorously. Chiang secured his release with a promise to confront the next Japanese military provocation, a provocation that ultimately occurred outside Beijing in July 1937. Chiang kept his promise and the fighting quickly spread down China's eastern seaboard. Japan overpowered the Chinese resistance and soon occupied China's east. Chiang and the Nationalists retreated to the interior where they established a wartime capital at Chongqing and committed to waging a long war of attrition.³⁸

The southeastern city of Shantou where Velva Brown resided was hit by bombings at the outset of the war. Then, in June 1939, the Japanese made Shantou a major target of a broader operation designed to isolate China even further from the outside world. The city itself fell under Japanese occupation, but much of the outlying area did not. Consequently, Shantou felt the effects of guerrilla warfare long after the city fell under

Japanese occupation in June. Brown treated the wounded, experienced daily air raids warnings, and occasionally came under direct fire. Her patients now came from the steady stream of refugees looking for safety in the missionary compound. Hunger and epidemic diseases such as typhoid and malaria stalked the city. Medicine shortages compromised her ability to treat the sick and wounded. As food in the countryside dwindled, Brown confronted the challenge of starving and increasingly brazen wild animals, particularly wolves, preying on the desperate women and children who scavenged the woods for fuel. "These are days of which it is difficult to write," a solemn Brown wrote to her congregation at home in early 1941. "Faces of workmen and women which used to be round and healthy in color are now thin and gray." Of all she had seen, Brown told her friends, "much of it is better not written."³⁹

In this physically and emotionally taxing environment, shortwave radio offered Brown a vital lifeline to her homeland. In the chaos and uncertainty of war, Brown understandably treasured radio broadcasts from her native northern California. One early Sunday morning in November 1938, just prior to Thanksgiving, Brown – a college football fan – accidentally stumbled across the transmission of a Stanford-California game. "You'll never guess what I did this morning!," an exuberant Brown began her November 20, 1938 letter to her childhood friend and confidant Frances Clausen. "This was only the third time I heard a voice from America," she explained after catching the beginning of the game at 6:00am. Even an ill-timed electrical outage that hit at 6:30am could not dampen Brown's spirits (she had to wait until later in the day to find out Cal topped Stanford by a rather uninspired score of 6–0). Brown and her friends excitedly planned to listen to another game scheduled to coincide with their Thanksgiving celebrations. These broadcasts, especially those from Berkeley, enabled the northern California native to imagine a simultaneous connection to her home in a way that excited her intertwined notions of national and local identity. "And just to know that I was listening to a voice right from Berkeley – well, use your imagination," Brown enthused.⁴⁰

From February 1939 onward, the Treasure Island-based W6XBE, broadcasting out of San Francisco Bay, provided an unprecedented opportunity to listen to just such a voice on a regular basis. "Thrill of Thrills," Brown exclaimed, striking a tone similar to W6XBE's biggest booster, Viola Smith. "The radio broadcast from Treasure Island comes in as clear as a bell and with plenty of force to take the roof off. We are all jubilant." Thanks to W6XBE, she could hear all of America directly from her Shantou outpost. The opportunity to listen to the broadcasts

of Easter church services from throughout the country over W6XBE in April 1939 enthralled Brown. "I couldn't tear myself away until I listened clear thru [sic], from Philadelphia across, the Grand Canyon and wound up with one on Mt. Davidson in San Francisco," she wrote. Nothing compared. It was, she celebrated, "a far cry from fifteen years ago, to say nothing of the days of the sailing craft that took months to navigate the ocean."⁴¹

W6XBE, in effect, augmented the strong connection to home Brown had already fostered. Through the postal system, she received catalogs from Sears & Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, deodorant, soap, stockings, Dr. Scholl's foot supports, *Reader's Digest* and *McCall's* magazines, the latest fiction from author Booth Tarkington, photographs, and even her "undies."⁴² Prior to W6XBE, the post also carried information about her favorite American radio programs. "Glad to be brought up to date on Amos & Andy," Brown wrote in early 1938. "Wish I could get 'em on my little radio."⁴³ The arrival of W6XBE's broadcasts in China a year later solved that problem.

Like other Americans grateful for the service W6XBE provided, Brown sent a letter of appreciation to the station.⁴⁴ In so doing, Brown exhibited another dimension of her "Americanness." US broadcasters encouraged listeners to send letters and often relied on that correspondence to gauge the popularity of their programs. Radio historian Bruce Lenthall contends that listeners used this correspondence to personalize their participation in the mass culture delivered into their homes through broadcasting. Within the United States, Lenthall argues, this correspondence enabled listeners to imagine meaningful personal relationships with stations, programs, and performers, and that dynamic helped combat loneliness and alienation in a world disrupted by the Great Depression.⁴⁵ For Velva Brown living thousands of miles from home and directly afflicted by the deprivations war, her letter of gratitude served a comparable purpose by personalizing a relationship with W6XBE in way that made it easier to endure the difficult present.

For these reasons, W6XBE (often referred to as "Treasure Island" with respect to its location in the San Francisco Bay) became a central part of Brown's daily routine in wartime China. She felt personally connected to her favorite radio personalities such as the popular Norman Page. "Time for Treasure Island," she wrote in a letter to Frances Clausen, "tho [sic] the new announcer does not do as well as Norman Page did. This one has a weaker voice and lets it drop in all the wrong places." Page actually returned to the air later that night, but the frustrated Brown felt he gave a substandard performance no better than his substitute had

provided.⁴⁶ By 1940 she was impressed that her “little old radio is still doing well” and that, with the exception of one newer model owned by a colleague, “there is none on [sic] the compound that I like any better.”⁴⁷ Brown was distressed when her trusty Pilot radio finally shorted out in 1941. Repairing the radio would not be easy with the ongoing war. “I hope I can get a new tube for my radio, thru [sic] the back door some way,” Brown wrote. “I feel out of touch with everything.”⁴⁸

Missionary Maud Russell, another Bay Area native, also embraced W6XBE (renamed KGEI in 1940) in very personal terms. Three days after the station began broadcasting, Russell purchased her own “Pilot” radio, just like Velva Brown. Russell diligently recorded her favorite broadcasts in her diary. “Heard FDR Pan American Speech,” she jotted down in an April 1940 entry. To Russell, the ability to establish a simultaneous connection to a distant homeland that lay many miles – and time zones – away was a central part of that imaginative connection to home the station provided. “Almost every *evening* I listen to your early *morning* broadcasts,” she effused in her own letter to the station that implicitly acknowledged the simultaneous bridging of several time zones (*italics added*). “[I]t is not only a satisfaction but also a thrill for a Hayward [California] person to be hearing about ‘the weather in the Bay region!’”⁴⁹

Russell’s fondness for the corporate-controlled W6XBE–KGEI might seem a bit contradictory in light of her broader left-leaning political views and activities. But such contradictions seemed to be the norm for Russell. Affiliated with the YWCA in China’s Guizhou province, this social gospel-inspired reformer’s activities concentrated on the area of women’s rights. Russell criticized American imperialism and yet she owed her ability to live and work in China to the imperialist “unequal treaties” of the nineteenth century. She manifested a critical attitude toward her government’s foreign policies; and yet she was an enthusiastic and grateful listener to the international station her government helped launch, at least in part, as a foreign policy initiative. In this light, perhaps it should be less surprising that this avowed liberal and leftist sent a letter of thanks to Treasure Island, which was owned by one of the largest and most powerful corporations in the United States. “You will be interested to know that the Treasure Island broadcasts are being received very clearly here,” she wrote in gratitude directly to the GE-owned station’s management.⁵⁰

As was the case with Velva Brown, W6XBE–KGEI was only the most recent of many tools Maud Russell had long used to maintain that sense of emotional and physical connection to her distant home. Russell, who

had first traveled to China in 1917, regularly corresponded with friends and family at home. She read the Shanghai-based American newspaper, the *China Weekly Review*. An aficionado of popular music, she had an impressive collection of records, which included recordings from artists such as American violinist Maud Powell, American vocalist Elsie Baker, the naturalized American singer Efrem Zimbalist, and the popular Irish tenor John McCormick whose songs made the Billboard charts in the US. She expressed enthusiasm at the introduction of “talkies” to China; she framed those movies as educational tools to teach Chinese how to talk “American” rather than as something to watch for her own entertainment. Since first arriving in China more than twenty years earlier, Russell took periodic furloughs home, traversing the Pacific on the modern ocean-liners that made such back-and-forth travel both feasible and comfortable. While on her 1938 furlough, Russell bought her first radio. Upon returning to Guizhou, she was dismayed to discover her new receiver operated on the wrong electric current for China, and an adapter was unavailable. Her new radio rendered useless, Russell’s radio listening became entirely dependent on invitations to other people’s homes to hear American broadcasts. When W6XBE–KGEI went on the air a few months later, Russell purchased yet another (and this time operational) radio to listen to the broadcasts in her own home.⁵¹

The significance W6XBE–KGEI assumed in Russell’s efforts to connect her life in China to America is clear. In a November 1940 letter to her parents Russell exclaimed, “[m]y radio continues to be a joy.” She rejoiced that she was able to “get Treasure Island every night” and “feel so close to home.” Imagine her dismay when just days later her radio broke. By the end of November, Russell anticipated the long-awaited return of her radio from the repair shop. “[H]ow very thankful I will be to have music again *this* night,” she wrote home, “how very thankful I am for a radio.”⁵²

Letter writing joined radio as the two most important tools to maintain her connections to home. “Please do write me about yourselves,” she pleaded at the end of one letter. “No letters have come,” Brown complained. “There’s much I want to know.”⁵³ Historian James Reed argues that missionary correspondence from China sent to family, friends, and home congregations worked alongside other missionary efforts to publicize their China activities, and fostered a wellspring of popular sympathy for China in the US by the early twentieth century. Consequently, many Americans, the majority of whom were Protestant and church-going, sympathized with the missionary outlook and embraced the missionaries’ idealistic views of China.⁵⁴ What correspondence from

missionaries such as Russell and Brown also underscores was that the significance of letter writing went beyond building a sympathetic American constituency willing to donate funds through their church to support China missions. Letter writing worked alongside W6XBE–KGEI and the wider American media milieu to allow missionaries to maintain a strong sense of connection to their homeland and their identities as Americans living in China.

So far, much of this analysis of the relationship between radio and national identity focuses on missionaries such as Vincent Morrison, W.M. Burnside, Velva Brown, and Maud Russell. Many readers may legitimately wonder just how representative these deeply religious Americans were, especially when compared to the majority of Americans who never left their native country. For all their differences, I contend that these missionaries did indeed share much in common with their fellow but more secular compatriots both at home and in China. These missionaries often shared an “imperial culture” with other Americans who believed a world that looked more like the United States would be a better world for all. Missionary work sought to export to China a new religious, cultural, and political order reflecting what missionaries believed to be positive and beneficial American values and practices (even by a left-leaning critic such as Maud Russell). As much as any businessman seeking economic opportunities, missionaries seeking converts benefited from the perks and entitlements that imperialism and extraterritoriality provided, which enabled them to pursue their religious agenda in China.⁵⁵ Moreover, in conjunction with those conversion efforts, missionaries often pursued multifaceted efforts to transplant and maintain an American way of life in the Chinese interior, which ranged from the types of social gospel-inspired educational or agricultural reforms they promoted to how they decorated and furnished their private homes.⁵⁶ This group of religiously inspired Americans found comfort and pleasure in listening to W6XBE–KGEI in the context of their wider efforts to maintain connections to their distant homeland. The attraction to the new station was perfectly consistent with the broader lives these self-defined Americans established for themselves in China

This overwhelming desire for a connection to home helped make W6XBE–KGEI’s *Sunday Mailbag* program especially popular among all Americans, including missionaries. This program, in which letters from friends in the US were read over the air to their intended recipients in China, was one that had earned particular praise from Viola Smith. Missionary Velva Brown was also a fan. She begged her longtime friend and Bay Area resident Frances Clausen to visit the station’s studios at the

crack of dawn on a Saturday morning. It was at that time, when it was Sunday evening in China, that the station broadcast this program. As part of this program, well-wishers who traveled to the studio in person were allowed to read their own messages during the broadcast. Brown's perceptual awareness that Saturday morning in California was Sunday evening in China propelled the missionary doctor to imagine a simultaneous and direct connection with her friend through this transnational broadcast. "You could talk to me out here," Brown succinctly pleaded in an effort to see that connection materialize.⁵⁷

To Qingdao-based missionary Mary K. Russell (no relation to Maud Russell), the *Mailbag* program was W6XBE-KGEI's definitive broadcast. "Do the rest of you, other than Mother, know about another way that you can send me messages, and quickly?," Russell excitedly wrote to her family. A social gospel-inspired Methodist missionary educator who was on the faculty at Shandong Christian University, Russell went on to describe the *Mailbag* show and the popularity it enjoyed among her and her friends. They regularly listened to the Sunday evening broadcast that had, Russell noted with delight, just expanded to more than two hours. The missionary made it clear how much she desired to receive a message from her own family via the *Mailbag*. Seeking the thrill of that simultaneous connection across the ocean, she too urged members of her family to go directly to the station at 6:00am on a Saturday morning, where they could broadcast a live and personal message to her that she would instantaneously hear all the way in China. Even when a message did not arrive for her, Russell was content. "If you don't get one yourself, it's exciting to hear those to other folk," Mary Russell explained. "But it is nice to have one's own."⁵⁸

The Ningbo-based Presbyterian husband and wife missionary team of Elleroy and Maybelle Smith likely understood Mary Russell's sentiments. The Smiths (no relation to Viola Smith) acquired their first radio – a rental – in February 1936 and purchased their own receiver shortly thereafter. They delighted in receiving personal radio messages from friends and family over long distances. "I heard my name mentioned over the radio – by Aimee," he gushed in the March 3, 1936 entry of his diary. The Smiths also received personal messages from Shanghai via the city's XMHA radio station. In that light, it is hardly surprising that after 1939, W6XBE-KGEI's *Mailbag* program caught both Smiths' attention. The *Sunday Mailbag* broadcast of a personal message from Elleroy Smith's parents in Iowa was particularly special. "We get a message from Sioux City!," he exclaimed in his diary entry. "Very thrilling." Even when personal messages failed to arrive via the *Sunday Mailbag*,

they shared Mary Russell's outlook that it was still enjoyable to spend the evening listening to others send messages from the US to China.⁵⁹

As was the case with other W6XBE-KGEI listeners, the station's broadcasts entered an expatriate household that was already immersed within a broader American media and communications milieu. The Smiths had become avid consumers of American movies, books, and magazines during their time in China. Voracious readers, they meticulously recorded in their respective diaries the books they read, which included best sellers such as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. They rarely missed an opportunity to see the latest American movie when they made one of their frequent trips to Shanghai. Among the latest releases they saw were Errol Flynn's *Green Light*, Disney's *Pinocchio*, and John Barrymore's *Romeo and Juliet*. They subscribed to the American *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* along with several other newspapers and popular American magazines such as *Reader's Digest*, all brought to their door by China's postal service. They celebrated American holidays such as the Fourth of July and Christmas, and during the Christmas season they exchanged cards and gifts with stateside friends and family (once again thanks to the postal service).⁶⁰

Well before W6XBE-KGEI hit the airwaves, broadcasting became a significant part of the Smiths' lives. Elleroy Smith left no doubt about how excited he was to have a radio in his house right from that original rental in early 1936. "We rent a radio for 4 months," he recorded in the February 29 entry of his diary. "Our first!" Through broadcasting, the Smiths received messages from American friends sent over other Shanghai stations, and they would stay up until all hours for a chance to hear something from the United States. "We got up at midnight last night," forty-eight-year-old Elleroy Smith wrote in the January 20, 1937 entry of his diary, "and listened to [the] inauguration of President Roosevelt." In that speech, the President addressed his audience, which included the Smiths in China, as "we Americans." Maybelle Smith enjoyed the opportunity to listen to these inaugural festivities from afar. "We got quite a thrill out it," she exclaimed. Radio even provided the Smiths access to religious programming sent out of Shanghai. To the Smiths, listening was also a communal event; they often listened to the radio with their neighbors.⁶¹

A 1938–39 furlough home gave the Smiths an opportunity to experience first hand the American popular, consumer, and political culture they had been engaged with from afar in China. Elleroy Smith was so enthused about radio that he bought one for his elderly parents in

Iowa. While in the United States, the Smiths listened to Edgar Bergen's *Charlie McCarthy* radio show, a program that later made it to China via W6XBE-KGEI. Beyond radio, their stateside immersion in American consumer culture included shopping trips to major department stores such as Gimbels, Sears, and Wanamakers. They saw the New York Giants take on the Pittsburgh Pirates at New York City's Polo Grounds. They visited the World's Fair in Queens, New York. The Smiths' were especially delighted to see Judy Garland and her companion Mickey Rooney in person at a special screening of the just-released *Wizard of Oz*.⁶²

Upon their return to China in 1939, W6XBE-KGEI provided yet another option for the Smiths to remain encapsulated in their American media milieu. One evening in March 1940, not too long after arriving back in China, Elleroy Smith invited a handful of neighbors over so they could stay up late, fiddle with the radio, and try to, as he put it, "listen in' on the USA." Reception proved to be awful that particular evening, leaving the frustrated Smith and his guests stymied in their attempts to hear anything from across the Pacific.⁶³ That disappointing evening notwithstanding, the Treasure Island station became a very important part of the Smiths' lives, through which they established a direct and simultaneous connection to the American nation all the way from China.

Laura Ward, a New England born and educated missionary teacher based in Fujian, certainly understood that appeal. She regularly listened to W6XBE-KGEI, particularly the *Mailbag* broadcast.⁶⁴ A phonograph player and a large record collection complimented her radio listening habits. So did the many newspapers and magazines she received via the mail from the United States. Friends and colleagues returning from furloughs provided her with desired consumer items, and the former grade school teacher with a degree in mathematics enjoyed her own American furlough in 1937.⁶⁵ Back in China when a war-related power surge fried her radio in 1940, Ward balked. "I felt quite out of this world the past two weeks since my radio has had to be sent to be fixed," she complained. "I suppose we should be thankful enough that with a blockade on we can still get mail fairly regularly and from all parts of the world at that," Ward rationalized.⁶⁶

For medical missionary Robert McClure, W6XBE-KGEI helped mitigate the stress of the grueling war relief work he pursued in unoccupied southwest China. "My heart is in the USA and I want continually to be there," he wrote after an especially draining day. W6XBE-KGEI and other shortwave broadcasts helped lift his spirits. "I do not have supper now until after I hear the radio," he wrote home in the summer of

1940 "At five I go to the house and have a tub of cold water and then lie vacant until the radio starts at 6:30."⁶⁷

McClure is an interesting individual in that his American identity coexisted with a Canadian one. A child of missionary parents who was born in 1900, his father was Canadian, his mother American. McClure, however, spent the first fifteen years of his life in China. As a young man, he left China to attend college in Canada and ultimately graduated from the University of Toronto's medical school in 1922. McClure returned to China in 1923 as a missionary doctor for the United Church of Canada Mission Hospital in the Henan province's Huaijing, married an Ontario woman in 1926, moved to southwest China after the Sino-Japanese War erupted in 1937, and ultimately retired in Canada after more than fifty years of medical missionary work around the world, twenty-five of which were spent in China.⁶⁸ A deep sense of Canadian national identity managed to coexist with the strong identification McClure forged with the American nation, despite having spent relatively little time in either country. Indeed, by his own account he learned to speak Chinese before English. And yet his personal and family ties to the United States and Canada were deep. With the outbreak of war in China in 1937, the demands on his medical work and the pressures he faced as a medical missionary grew exponentially, and he looked to the United States for comfort. Like Velva Brown, he began to feel overwhelmed by the war. "I continue to be torn asunder," McClure wrote with a tone of desperation in August 1940. "Life here is so depressing.... If only the war would stop so that things could be near normal again." Amidst these pressures, McClure found himself thinking of greener pastures on the other side of the Pacific. Ultimately, McClure's conscience dictated he stay in China when he thought about how many Chinese had come to depend on his medical expertise. "I can't bring myself to cut loose," he noted somewhat regrettably. Living and working in wartime China, unable to bring himself to leave, McClure found some comfort in listening to W6XBE-KGEI as part of his evening radio ritual.⁶⁹

McClure's situation speaks in interesting way to the process of shaping individual identity in transnational contexts. Canadian and American identities are not, of course, interchangeable – but at the same time, the shared Anglo tradition provided substantial common ground among the people of both nationalities. That someone with McClure's particular background could embrace both a Canadian and American identity, that McClure himself could declare from China that his "heart is in the USA" and then later retire to Canada, is not necessarily surprising. More

noteworthy is that McClure spent very little of his early life in either Canada or the United States. Most of the first fifty years of his life were spent in China. And yet, he nonetheless understood himself to be, at least in part, an American. In the process, W6XBE–KGEI's broadcast spoke to that understanding for McClure and countless other Americans in China and the surrounding region.

Dr. A. Holmes Johnson, a listener in Kodiak, Alaska, might have best articulated how W6XBE–KGEI satiated the desire to remain emotionally connected to the distant United States. Although an American territory in name, undeveloped Alaska was so far from the continental United States that it might as well have been a foreign land. "[A]s we have no newspapers, and often, only monthly boat service," Johnson wrote to the FCC shortly after moving to Alaska, "we are quite dependent on the radio for almost all of our entertainment and most of our news." For this reason, the former Oregonian asked for the station to increase its time on the air. "If W6XBE could remain on the air until eleven o'clock, PST, (nine o'clock our time) it would give us all of the main NBC programs daily." Making this pitch for W6XBE–KGEI was consistent with Johnson's determination to improve community services and create an identifiably American environment in remote Kodiak beyond his own ability to contribute much needed medical care. His efforts also led to the establishment of Kodiak's first public library in 1946. The library complimented the shortwave tie to the continental United States by providing access to the latest books and periodicals in a way that also helped minimize Kodiak's residents' emotional distance from the continental United States. Minimizing that sense of distance was very important to Johnson. Johnson was trying to create the American media milieu that W6XBE–KGEI's China-based listeners took for granted. Appropriately, Johnson's letter to the FCC praising W6XBE–KGEI for providing access to NBC programming also included an additional request – that the FCC license a second station to broadcast the shows of NBC rival network CBS. If that were to happen, Johnson concluded, "we would be in almost as good a position as if we were in the States."⁷⁰

Perhaps missionary Grace Morrison Boynton best captured the pervasiveness of the American media and communications milieu that surrounded the W6XBE–KGEI listening experience in China itself. The Beijing-based missionary who taught English to potential converts had ensconced herself in the American media milieu amidst the ongoing Sino-Japanese War. In addition to being a regular radio listener, she read American books, observed the major holidays (even George Washington's birthday), listened to her favorite music on her Victrola,



Figure 4.9 Dr. A. Holmes Johnson, c. 1940s (Courtesy of Dr. Bob Johnson)

kept abreast of events at home through the mail, and socialized with her American friends. With China being ravaged by war, she experienced growing doubts about her work in China. "Why am I teaching English instead of giving water to wounded?," Boynton wondered in an August 1939 diary entry. Despite being well-traveled, the Massachusetts-

born Boynton acknowledged “I do carry New England with me.” It was no coincidence that among the many books she read in China was *Wickford Point*, a New England-based novel by Massachusetts native John P. Marquand. In China, surrounded by troops movements, battles, and death, Boynton realized how insulated she had in fact become from what the Chinese endured in their war-torn country where she resided. It was an isolation partly enabled by the American media and communications milieu in which she was immersed. “[I]n the midst of this,” she scornfully noted in her diary, “we go on as if we lived on Maine [sic] St. in Kansas USA.”⁷¹

* * *

For a station founded in large part on its potential to encourage cross-cultural exchange, W6XBE–KGEI ultimately offered a distinctly American listening experience. W6XBE–KGEI fostered a sense of engagement with the United States among its listeners. The station accentuated their conscious efforts to forge connections to an “imagined community” of American compatriots on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. The programs to which these Americans in China and elsewhere in the Pacific region responded so favorably – *Sherlock Holmes*, *Charlei McCarthy*, college football games, presidential speeches – primarily targeted American domestic audiences. While the popular *Sunday Mailbag* program offered content created especially for an American audience abroad, it still directed listeners’ attention to a distinctly American domestic context – letters and well wishes from dear family and friends in the United States, sometimes delivered in their own voice. The station’s dedicated listeners included officials such as the US Trade Commissioner in Shanghai Viola Smith, whose tireless efforts helped bring the station into being. It included Adele Williams, the wife of the Commercial Attaché in Tokyo who begged station management to play better version of the American national anthem and emphasize more English-language programming for the “real Americans” in East Asia. Social gospel-inspired missionary doctors and educators in China such as Maud Russell, Velva Brown, and Robert McClure were a part of the vast audience; they used the station to maintain their sense of connection to the United States amidst the tumult of the Sino-Japanese War. The station’s listeners also included many more obscure Americans living throughout the Asia-Pacific region, some who identified themselves as nothing more than grateful Americans happy to have access to a distinctly American station. Through books, newspapers, magazines, letters, and furloughs,

many of the listeners such as Elleroy and Maybelle Smith were already entrenched in an American media and communications milieu that kept them in close contact with their American friends, family, country, and identity. W6XBE–KGEI offered these Americans another, more captivating opportunity to keep in touch with a homeland from which they never intended to be severed.⁷²

The arrival of W6XBE–KGEI broadcasts in East Asia excited the imagination in a way those other communications media could not. Enthusiasm about the programming and the perceptions of a simultaneous connection to the US infused the listening experience. This station transmitted the same radio programs to Asia that were listened to by millions of Americans living in the United States. American listeners in East Asia were invested in many of the same cultural values and presumptions that made the programs popular among domestic audiences; not surprisingly, these listeners embraced the opportunity to listen to these same programs while living abroad. At the same time, the sense of simultaneity that became woven into the listening experience further enhanced the intoxicating appeal of the station. W6XBE–KGEI broadcast an American “voice” from the distant United States that reached East Asia instantaneously in a way that often personalized American mass culture for the listener abroad. That voice might be conveyed through a specific program, a particular announcer, or even a well-wisher using the *Mailbag* program. No other elements in the surrounding American media and communications milieu – not newspapers, not books, not letters – could provide that same sense of a direct and simultaneous connection to the events, trends, and developments occurring in the United States.

In the process, W6XBE–KGEI extended the dynamics of American national identity formation into the international arena. In her analysis of the intersection between domestic broadcasting and the imagined American national community, Susan Douglas writes, “Listeners themselves insisted that this technology enhance their ability to imagine their fellow citizens, as well as be transported to ‘national’ events and to other parts of the country.”⁷³ Listeners in China and the broader Asia-Pacific region made the same insistence of W6XBE–KGEI. As if to prove the point, Velva Brown found herself captivated by the American Easter services W6XBE–KGEI broadcast in 1939 and listened the entire evening as the station’s coverage moved westward from Philadelphia all the way to San Francisco. Viola Smith, the American Trade Commissioner in Shanghai, was right to identify W6XBE–KGEI’s appeal in its ability to provide better and more consistent coverage of “important American

happenings and events." She intuitively understood that Americans would gravitate toward popular NBC programs and well-known commentators such as Lowell Thomas. In fact, W6XBE-KGEI earned its greatest accolades for its *Sunday Mailbag* program and its ability to create a sense of connection between Americans in China and their closest friends and family at home in the United States.

Adapting to these listener interests was of little consequence for the station. General Electric, like other broadcasters, operated the station primarily to hold a place on the radio spectrum until short-wave broadcasting might prove profitable at some point in the future; rebroadcasting existing NBC programs was an inexpensive way to accomplish that goal. W6XBE-KGEI's most popular original program, *Sunday Mailbag*, was even less expensive than paying for the rights to NBC programs, since all it involved was an announcer reading correspondence over the air. Largely unintentional and unplanned, W6XBE-KGEI ultimately broadcast programs that provoked American listeners to imagine their distant fellow citizens and distant national events in a very personal way as they listened to their radios on the other side of the world.

The ways in which W6XBE-KGEI was rooted in a particularly American national context rendered it ill-equipped to promote true cross-cultural exchanges. It is, in any case, difficult to imagine what those exchanges would entail. English-language broadcasts would not reach the vast majority of the non-English speaking Asian population. The cultural sensibilities expressed through a program such as *Amos 'n' Andy* would not necessarily carry over into another cultural context. And what interest might an English-speaking Chinese listener have in listening to a two-hour Sunday evening program in which letters from Americans in the United States were read over the air to friends and family living in China? A Chinese domestic context enveloped by continuing imperialism, layers of anti-foreignism, increasingly energized nationalism, and war further impinged on W6XBE-KGEI's chances to ever become "an excellent thing for American Chinese relationships," to quote one of Viola Smith's earlier claims. Indeed, the station put forward a programming slate closely attuned to the interests of an American domestic audience, a focus Viola Smith promoted. As a result, the station was not positioned to further the type of radio cosmopolitanism that Viola Smith had concurrently envisioned. The contradiction, so apparent in hindsight, likely and understandably eluded Smith. For American diplomats long attuned to identifying the spread of American culture and values abroad as mutually desirable while at

the same time being conditioned to view radio as the ultimate technological tool to spread such influences, the opportunities of bridging the Sino-American divide through American radio programming seemed close at hand.

As a matter of fact, W6XBE–KGEI's obvious American flavor actually risked undermining international relationships. A distinctly American station risked generating the fervent opposition to foreign broadcasting in China that long predated W6XBE–KGEI. That possibility was punctuated by that one Chinese listener's criticism of Palmolive commercials broadcast over Chinese stations noted in the previous chapter. By operating as a distinctly American station in this volatile context, a station like W6XBE–KGEI could actually have a more divisive effect by inspiring opposition to its very presence. As the next two chapters make clear, this divisive potential was, in fact, realized in the late 1930s and early 1940s. During this period, American missionary broadcasts and American radio newscasts, each controversial in their own right, could be heard throughout East Asia. On the eve of the Pacific War, however, the main adversary to American radio was no longer China, but Japan.

5

“Win China for Christ through Radio”: Religious Broadcasting and the American Missionary Movement in Nationalist China

“Mr. Chang” credited his conversion to Christianity in early 1937 to the Shanghai-based Christian broadcasting station XMHD. The American missionary-affiliated Shanghai Christian Broadcasting Association [SCBA] owned and operated XMHD. The organization celebrated Mr. Chang’s account as an example of harnessing radio’s tremendous power and influence over its listeners in the service of spreading Christianity. “Mr. Chang... having heard talks on public health and hygiene together with the doctrine of Christ became greatly anxious,” the SCBA wrote to the American missionary periodical, *The Chinese Recorder*. The SCBA further reported that Chang visited their Shanghai office poised to abandon his “false” Buddhist faith and accept the “true” Christian faith. That visit to the SCBA offices ultimately convinced Chang to make the switch. The SCBA touted other success stories as well. A wealthy merchant who lost his fortune when he contracted a debilitating disease found Christ after hearing XMHD’s broadcasts. A former political leader from Jiangsu, once “bitterly opposed Christianity,” also converted after listening to an XMHD program. There was “Mr. Yang,” a printer and “ardent idolator” [sic] who, while recovering from an illness, “casually turned on his wireless.” He heard an XMHD program about good health that also celebrated the virtues of believing in Christ. “Each sentence seemed to fit Mr. Yang exactly,” the SCBA reported. Yang converted, along with his family.¹

The SCBA hoped that religious radio broadcasting could overcome a disappointing history of conversions. Powerful Christian radio

programs, the organization believed, could more effectively convey the Christian message missionaries had long promoted in China. Accounts of radio-inspired conversions seemed to confirm the possibility of success. Like so many of their contemporaries, a misguided technological enthusiasm led these missionaries to define radio as a tool to break down parochial cultural barriers in favor of fostering broader cross-cultural understandings. In the case of religious broadcasting, the missionaries of the SCBA hoped that radio could promote a Christianity that recognized no national boundaries and thereby provided the basis of that cross-cultural understanding. "The sole purpose," the SCBA claimed for its station XMHD, "is to put on constructive programs and advance the kingdom of God." The group's promotional literature explicitly distanced itself from any particular sectarian connections "so that we can get the hearty support of all the Christian Constituency in China."² Joseph King, a pastor and cofounder of the SCBA, was confident that broadcasting was a providential gift to the missionary community. "Radio," he wrote in 1936, "is the most effective instrument of communication in modern times" and in China it had become "as deep-rooted in the community life as is the newspaper."³

Such accounts, however, cannot be taken as representative of Christian broadcasting's wider impact. Missionaries authored these third-person accounts. They say nothing about the vast Chinese audience that may or may not have been listening to XMHD's Christian programming at any given time. The decision to publish those stories actually says more about missionaries' culturally based presumptions regarding radio's power to affect change than it does about widespread Chinese involvement with Christian radio.

Rather than serve as an effective tool for conversion, Christian radio in 1930s China provided an even better vehicle for American missionaries living in a foreign land to engage their intertwined Christian and American identities. Christianity and national identity had long been conjoined in the American historical experience, and the story of Christian broadcasting in 1930s China helps illustrate that interconnection. Moreover, to the extent that missionaries represented one of the most visible examples of an American presence in 1930s China, this inextricable linking of Christianity to American identity was fraught with political meaning. Japanese expansion in China, the subsequent outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, and US governmental opposition to Japanese designs on China provided a volatile backdrop to the missionary presence in the late 1930s. With visible ties to both Chinese and American officialdom, American missionaries could not escape the

political connotations of their position, nor did they want to. Sincere beliefs in radio's power to convert notwithstanding, American missionaries ended up using Christian broadcasting to convey their own connections to the wider American nation to which they belonged and to its policies that they supported. By the early 1940s, Christian broadcasting became a casualty of Japanese imperialism, not because of the religion it preached but because of the politics it represented.⁴

"What a possibility! What an opportunity!"

Like so many other Americans in radio's early years, convictions about the power and influence of broadcasting captured the imagination of American missionaries and other Christian activists in China. Broadcasting presented itself to the American missionary movement as a panacea for overcoming the embarrassing deficit of Chinese Christian converts. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, missionary efforts to bring Christianity to China expanded as an adjunct to the era's escalating foreign imperialism. With emerging Chinese nationalist and xenophobic movements blaming imperialism for China's mounting troubles by the twentieth century, increasing numbers of disenchanted Chinese directed their resentment and hostility toward missionaries, their converts, and Christianity itself.⁵ After nearly a century of intensive mission work, only a relatively paltry 600,000 Chinese out of a population of nearly half a billion had converted to Christianity. Even that 600,000 figure was misleading. It included about 200,000 Chinese who belonged to indigenous Christian sects, which embraced a syncretic mixture of Christian and Chinese beliefs that many missionaries had trouble recognizing as Christianity at all. With broadcasting at its disposal, the SCBA saw the obstacles to securing widespread and legitimate conversions dissipating quickly. "What a possibility!! What an Opportunity!!," the SCBA exuded. "NOW IS THE STRATEGIC TIME for all Christians to win China – with one fourth of the whole world's population – for CHRIST!," the broadcasting organization confidently claimed.⁶

Radio and proselytizing, it seemed, should go hand in hand. "I dare say Broadcasting of the Good News is the greatest means of spreading the Gospel since the invention of the printing press," proclaimed K.S. Lee, a wealthy Shanghai businessman and convert who helped found the SCBA. In framing broadcasting's value to Christianizing China, Lee's SCBA linked Christianity's low rate of conversions in China to illiteracy. "They cannot read the Bible or any other Christian literature," the SCBA lamented about China's 80 percent illiteracy rate.

Broadcasting, however, could surmount that obstacle. "THERE IS NO ILLITERACY THROUGH THE EARS!," its promotional pamphlet blared. "Gospel messages through the radio can go right into homes, dormitories, and hospitals, WHEN OFTEN THESE DOORS ARE CLOSED TO PREACHERS." That populous China was a country geographically larger than Europe also did not concern the SCBA. "RADIO BROADCASTS CAN ANNIHILATE BOTH DISTANCE AND TIME," the organization claimed. In describing XMHD's origins, Lee recounted a conversation he had with a colleague in 1933. "Why not start a broadcasting station for the Lord?," Lee's friend inquired. "Why not," Lee agreed, putting up the capital and securing the necessary permit. The five founding members of the SCBA knew nothing of running a radio station, Lee claimed. Nonetheless, XMHD went on the air as a nondenominational Christian broadcasting station in October 1934.⁷

The new station balanced the political advantages of presenting itself as a Chinese station against the significance of its American missionary connections. With the 1930s climate discouraging a foreign presence over China's airwaves, a Chinese SCBA member registered as XMHD's owner. Ten out of eleven members of the organization's board of directors were Chinese. The board named K.S. Lee as its General Secretary, and he served alongside a Chinese secretary and Chinese treasurer. At the same time, an indispensable connection to the American missionary movement manifested itself in more subtle ways. SCBA board members such as the National Christian Council's Chen Wenyuan (W.Y. Chen), and Shanghai Baptist Alliance leader Zhao Xi'en (Samuel Zau) had close ties to the American missionary movement. Gu Ziren (T.Z. Koo), an American-born Chinese prominent in the YMCA, served on the board as well. The board also appointed a Chicago-based Chinese-born pastor as Associate General Secretary. XMHD's nondenominational approach to Christian broadcasting reflected a significant trend in US-based religious broadcasting by the 1930s. The SCBA even maintained an office in New York, where it could take advantage of its ties to the American Mission Board, also headquartered in that city.⁸

XMHD enjoyed a promising start. After just a year on the air, the SCBA raised enough money to upgrade their station from 150 watts of power to a full kilowatt. The organization used their old equipment to start a second Christian station in Beijing, XLKA. Both stations enjoyed a wide transmission range. Even XLKA, running on only 150 watts, could be heard throughout north China. Additional missionary-run Christian broadcasting stations operated out of Wuhan, Shaohing, Jinan, and Hong Kong.⁹

The missionary movement even addressed concerns about the relative lack of receivers beyond the cities. Lack of receiver ownership in the countryside threatened to undermine their broadcasting initiative's potential effectiveness. Consequently, the American Mission Board in Beijing regularly rotated the six battery-operated radio sets it owned among different rural preachers. The Mission Board even provided a steady supply of batteries to keep those sets working. Although supplying those batteries proved costly, the *Chinese Recorder* assured its readers in 1936 that it was worth it. "[A]s the expense is carried further," the missionary publication editorialized, "it is possible that the service rendered would prove much greater than would be possible by other means."¹⁰ The SCBA's satellite organization in North China touted its expanding audience beyond Beijing's city limits. "An increasing number of listeners tune in on the Sunday evening worship often inviting their friends in to listen," the group reported.¹¹

SCBA members stood ready to celebrate any evidence of radio's effectiveness at proselytizing. American Presbyterian missionary Aimee Millican, one of the station's founding members and its musical director, reported receiving many letters from XMHD's listeners inspired by



Figure 5.1 Aimee Millican (far right) Zhao Xi'en (far left), K.S. Lee (second from left), and other XMHD staff, c. 1940s (Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church U.S.A, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Used with permission)

the broadcasts to embrace Christ. Through XMHD, Millican claimed in 1940, these listeners came to understand that “God is the solution of China’s need now and He can use anyone to help save China who will put their lives under his direction.” In one instance, Millican reported receiving a phone call at home from a listener who had heard the previous evening’s broadcast and wanted to talk about God.¹² Millican credited another of her broadcasts for mending a frayed relationship and bringing the two previously estranged individuals closer to God.¹³ She also recounted a heartwarming story of a young woman who was evicted from her home for embracing Christianity, but welcomed back after XMHD’s broadcasts led the entire family to convert.¹⁴

XMHD founder K.S. Lee offered up his own collection of radio conversion stories in the SCBA’s very first *Christian Broadcast Bulletin*, published in 1936. One anecdote echoed a somewhat common theme among broadcasting’s earliest advocates: the blind listener, once isolated from and limited in the world, is saved by radio. “The blind boys wrote us how they felt,” Lee explained. “They could not see shows, read books, walk, etc.,” he claimed. But Christian radio finally brought God into their isolated lives. He cited another letter from a couple who decided to abandon their joint suicide pact after hearing one of the broadcasts. To Lee, these Christian radio success stories offered a “definite sign that our Lord’s return is at hand.”¹⁵

This connection Lee drew between Christian broadcasting and the Lord’s second coming points to broader Western ideas about technology and religion that infused Lee’s Christianity. Since at least the Middle Ages, Western intellectuals and thinkers of various stripes theorized about technology’s ability to re-establish humanity’s connection to and harmony with God, presumably squandered at the Garden of Eden. The pursuit and use of scientific and technological knowledge became central to this quest for “transcendence” because it allowed humanity to overcome their earthly limitations through the discovery of divine knowledge once held only by God.¹⁶ For K.S. Lee, a Chinese man influenced by the Western and American missionary tradition, radio – the communications medium that could “annihilate both space and time” – was an ideal technological tool to pursue transcendence. XMHD’s Frank Millican, husband to XMHD musical director Aimee Millican, agreed. In 1937, he praised radio as one of the many “marvelous instruments given to us by God” and exclaimed that “scientific knowledge has given us wonderful control over the forces of nature.” “Through the goodness of God and the generosity of Chinese friends,” Millican concluded, “China now has this marvelous radio station.”¹⁷ Missionary doctor and XMHD contributor Lee Huizenga noted that the scientific laws behind

radio communications had existed “since creation,” and it was only the discovery of those laws and how to apply them to radio that was new. As humans discovered those laws, Huizenga argued, God revealed himself to man. With radio serving as his example, Huizenga insisted it was incumbent upon the Christian “[t]o use any natural powers in creation to make known the love of God” and to seek the “the extension of his kingdom.”¹⁸

Radio’s transcendent qualities also impressed American missionary A.R. Gallimore. “While the Lord has used all modern inventions to glorify himself,” wrote this SCBA board member in summer 1937, “perhaps none has developed so rapidly as the radio.” Only a few years before, the prospect of instantaneous communication between distant ends of the earth was “unthinkable,” Gallimore observed. “If this is possible for men, how much more with God?” Gallimore had no doubt that if “men can conceive of radio, there is no limit to the power of Him.”¹⁹ Writing in 1939, another SCBA member, H.G.C. Hallock, envisioned God himself as “the Great Broadcaster” and celebrated XMHD’s power to bring its listeners “in tune with God.”²⁰

Beliefs in radio’s transcendent powers only heightened the widespread enthusiasm for Christian broadcasting’s potential in China. The 1938 meeting of the International Missionary Council held in Madras, India singled out XMHD and its sister Christian broadcasting stations in China for particular praise. “The use of radio for the furthering of evangelistic work of the Church is gradually being extended in China,” claimed an unattributed essay published in the conference proceedings. The Shanghai Christian Broadcasting Association’s “sole purpose,” this report claimed, “is to put on the air constructive programs to advance the Kingdom of God.”²¹ As one contributor to the *Chinese Recorder* explained in a similar vein, missionaries needed to embrace radio as one of many tools they could use to spread Christianity. “Where there are new methods, new ideas, new powers of value to mankind,” F.W. Price effused, “let them be captured for the cause of wider Christian evangelism.”²² Radio, wrote another missionary broadcaster, “was a means to bring Him in” and allow “many a sin-sick soul [to] rise up in the privacy of their homes to join the congregation of the Lord and to glorify Him.”²³

XMHD’s daily schedule clearly conveyed that intention. The secular *China Weekly Review* described XMHD as “almost exclusively devoted to religious topics.”²⁴ Evangelical content indeed dominated XMHD’s daily English and Chinese language schedules. While the station’s English-language offerings included the occasional reform-minded, social gospel-

infused programs on public health or rural reconstruction initiatives, they were not part of the standard daily schedule. Regularly scheduled English-language weekday programs included religious music (including a sing-along program), church services, meditation, and Bible stories for children. Each Sunday evening a general religious service broadcast from a church was followed by an “evangelistic service.” A fifteen-minute afternoon news program sponsored by the *North China Daily News* provided the only regularly scheduled deviation from this evangelical emphasis in the English-language schedule. XMHD’s Chinese language programming adopted a similar evangelical focus. Its 1940 schedule did carry a daily program entitled “Western Medicine and Sanitary Practices” that had no regularly scheduled English-language counterpart. Yet even on the Chinese side, this social gospel-inspired public health broadcast was the only non-evangelical offering among the seventeen Chinese language programs on that daily schedule. In both Chinese and English, the overwhelming emphasis in programming was decidedly evangelical.²⁵

This evangelical emphasis in Christian broadcasting hints at the deeper tensions in the American missionary movement. The American missionary movement as a whole was primarily social gospel in emphasis by the 1930s and, as the previous chapter noted, dedicated to securing conversions through the pursuit of agricultural, education, medical and social reforms that could alleviate pervasive poverty, disease, and ignorance. With narrow evangelizing under attack for its irrelevance to the lives of impoverished Chinese, by the second decade of the twentieth century nearly every major Protestant denomination embraced the social gospel approach and the majority of the American missionaries in China were no longer directly engaged in evangelical activities. The social gospel approach did pay some dividends as the number of Protestant Chinese doubled between 1927 and 1949, although the numbers were never significant enough to comprise more than a very small percentage of the overall Chinese population.²⁶

Not all American missionaries, however, believed that the social gospel was the answer to the problem of securing conversions. These critics of the social gospel resented the financial burden that maintaining institutions like schools and hospitals placed on tight mission budgets. Missionary F.W. Price, one such critic, fundamentally rejected the charge that evangelizing was counterproductive to securing conversions. “Our reaction to these objections, I believe, should be not less evangelism,” he wrote, “but more evangelism, better evangelism, deeper and more radical evangelism.” To Price, a station like XMHD offered the ideal tool to meet these concerns. “Let us not be afraid to use...the radio,” the

evangelical Price proclaimed while listing various methods missionaries might use to increase converts.²⁷

That Christian broadcasting could help address the concerns of defensive evangelical missionaries speaks to that widespread belief in radio's unmatched influential powers. XMHD's signal blanketed China, wider East Asia, and much of the western Pacific. The potential audience that could hear XMHD's broadcasts, an audience that might not be located anywhere near a church, enthralled evangelical missionaries such as Price. The cost of one radio broadcast was far less than the expense of sending actual preachers to cover the equivalent ground. Moreover, one such broadcast presumably possessed more influential powers than an army of preachers anyway. Broadcasting thereby provided a cost-effective method to get the Christian message out to a wide audience that even the best-funded evangelically focused missionary movement would find beyond its abilities. And it could do so without disrupting the budget priorities of a social gospel-dominated missionary movement. At the same time, carving out an evangelical niche for radio on China's airwaves could help counter the perceived harmful effects of "popular" radio, which allegedly worked in tandem with the press, movies, and even museums in pushing youth farther from God and cultivating anti-religious attitudes. In this light, that Frank and Aimee Millican were pivotal forces behind XMHD's establishment makes perfect sense. The husband and wife team were considered the heart of the Shanghai outpost of the so-called "Oxford Group," an international evangelical missionary movement that celebrated the value of public apologies, public confessions, and group therapy-type methods to promote redemption (the Oxford Group has even been credited with helping found Alcoholics Anonymous). XMHD promised to give the Millicans, who also led Shanghai's Christian Literature Society, an even more influential platform to publicize their distinctly evangelical approach to missionary work.²⁸

Just as important, evangelical broadcasting also appealed to the dominant social gospel element in American missionary work. Attending church services and teaching the Gospel were as important to these religious-minded people as they were to their more evangelically minded colleagues. To the extent that a distant radio broadcast could address these needs without draining the funds devoted to various social gospel-inspired initiatives, radio evangelism was a welcome option to reformers. The *Chinese Recorder* made this point when it heralded the North China Christian Broadcasting Station's evangelism in its June 1937 issue. It underscored how the station's Sunday religious

programming and worship services could meet the needs of Christians who have to work on the Sabbath. "An increasing number tune in on the Sunday evening worship service often inviting their friends," the *Recorder* noted. Listeners were likely to include a significant percentage of people with Sunday obligations and responsibilities that conflicted with attending service in a church. The *Recorder* pointed out that "[r]ural workers, apprentices, hospital staffs, and many others listen in" – in other words, missionaries motivated by the social gospel.²⁹

In addition to the church services, Bible readings, and singing of hymns that dominated the schedule, the evangelical emphasis even infused some nominally social gospel-oriented programs that sometimes squeezed their way onto the air. Along those lines, XMHD's March 1938 newsletter touted the popularity of a medical program hosted by Dr. Joseph King. It highlighted how King allowed the gospel to pervade his medical advice and insisted this approach won him listeners by the thousands. One listener wrote that it was the Gospel message that proved the most valuable part of the broadcast. Another claimed that modern medicine did not, in fact, cure him from an unidentified ailment. This listener instead credited his recovery to "a heart at peace and joy springing from the peace which only Jesus Christ could give." Another man apparently tuned into King's program with a "bitterly anti-Christian" disposition but found himself "repenting with tears" before he "surrendered to Christ" by the program's conclusion. Curiously, this letter contained no reference to anything medical in nature. One suicidal listener suffering from tuberculosis also offered no comment about quality of the medical information dispensed over the program. Instead the program introduced him to the "message of Hope in Christ." This listener's suicidal tendencies dissipated, his entire family converted, and he recovered from his tuberculosis, or so claimed the missionary who wrote the letter sharing this story. "He writes now he is strong and happy," the correspondent assured his audience.³⁰

In attempting to navigate the tensions between the evangelical and social gospel wings of the American missionary movement, XMHD managed to strike a particular proselytizing tone that satisfied the needs and interests of both groups. Still, it is instructive that of the listener letters quoted above, actual Chinese listeners wrote none. Missionaries instead conveyed their stories second-hand. Indeed, most of the direct evidence we have of how listeners engaged with XMHD and Christian broadcasting comes from the American missionaries who were lifelong Christians. These missionaries traveled to China for the purpose of converting the country's populace to Christianity. That they were drawn

to a radio station that echoed their own Christian values and engaged their long-standing religious identity is logical. Perhaps the stories are exaggerated, perhaps not. Regardless, the very act of writing those letters conveys the importance Christian broadcasting held in the minds of these missionaries working abroad.

This significance, however, was not just religious in nature. XMHD's appeal also rested on how it engaged the missionaries' sense of their national identity. This fusion of religious and national outlooks surrounding XMHD and its sister stations contributed to the unexpected politicization of Christian broadcasting in China by the mid-1930s.

Identity and the politicization of religious radio

At first glance, XMHD was a Christian station speaking to a common Christian fellowship. Just as W6XBE-KGEI situated itself within the surrounding American media milieu that had already engaged the secular station's listeners, XMHD and like-minded Christian stations fit into the broader context of Christian churches, extraterritorial privileges, religiously inspired reform programs, and evangelical literature that long underpinned the missionary presence in China. The American missionaries who listened to, broadcast over, and commented on XMHD were embedded in that wider context. That engagement with XMHD served to satiate an existing notion of Christian identity that inspired missionaries' very presence in China. In this regard, evangelical radio truly did preach to the converted.

H.G.C. Hallock, a pastor in a Shanghai Presbyterian church who had been in China since 1896, provides a sense of that dynamic. To Hallock, part of XMHD's appeal lay in crossing paths with a fellow listener the next day, which provided an opportunity to converse about common religious interests. "How often after 'listening in' some evening," Hallock pondered, "has someone said 'Did you listen in on XMHD last night and hear that wonderful music, or hear that inspiring message?'" For Hallock, XMHD engaged its audience's collective sense of its Christian identity, comparable to W6XBE-KGEI's engagement of its audiences' collective sense of an American identity. XMHD, Hallock insisted, put its listeners "in tune with one another." The sound of a familiar voice over the station, Hallock explained, pushed the listener to "imagine you see him by your side." Hallock believed this so-called imagined community of fellow Christians of which he was a part had used radio to achieve transcendence. "[W]e are in tune with all God's people who are listening in to Him," Hallock claimed.³¹

For some American missionaries, the fusion of Christianity and technological enthusiasm underscored the superiority of West. The United States emerged out of a Western historical tradition that had long used Christianity to justify a sense of superiority over the “savages” encountered in distant lands. As Western mastery of technology began to overshadow Christianity as the key benchmark during the nineteenth century, Christianity could still compliment technology-based notions of Western superiority. “[T]he West is leading the world,” New York pastor-turned-China missionary Charles Edward Jefferson claimed in one XMHD broadcast. “Western nations have in some way gotten hold of the secret of wealth and power,” he concluded with a nod to the advantages provided by science and technology. The key to that success, Jefferson postulated like so many others, lay in embracing the New Testament.³²

A sense of American national identity coexisted with those manifestations of a broader Western Christian identity. XMHD cofounder, broadcaster, and listener Frank Millican offers one example. The Christian identity that propelled his involvement with XMHD coexisted with a parallel desire to listen to W6XBE–KGEL, particularly its *Mailbag* program, which satisfied his desire to maintain a connection to his distant homeland. He articulated his deep, overlapping attachments to family, home, lifestyle, and religion in a letter to his daughter Edith. “I approve of your fondness for basket ball [sic], for riding dad’s back for a pony, for swimming in the lake,” the supportive father wrote as his only child prepared to begin medical school in the United States in anticipation of becoming a medical missionary. “And I approve of your high idealism and devotion to human welfare and the service of God.”³³

The missionary couple of Elleroy and Maybelle Smith also navigated with ease the varying layers of their personal identities. These are the same Smiths discussed in Chapter 4 who fulfilled a coexisting sense of American identity by becoming deeply embedded in the wider American media milieu by listening to W6XBE–KGEL, watching American movies, subscribing to American periodicals, and reading American books while living in China. The Smiths, who were close family friends of the Millicans and fellow Presbyterians, used XMHD to satisfy a particular religious viewpoint. An excited Elleroy Smith wrote to XMHD in early 1937 praising its broadcasts and asking that he and his wife be put on the mailing list to receive a monthly copy of its broadcast bulletin.³⁴

American missionaries such as the Smiths, for example, did not conceive of themselves as either exclusively “American” or “Christian.” Their senses of self encompassed both notions, and no doubt shared



Figure 5.2 Aimee Millican (back row, second from right), Frank Millican (back row, center), Edith Millican (front row, far right), Elleroy Smith (back row, far left), Maybelle Smith (front row, left, with hands crossed), and other missionaries in Ningbo, c. 1920s (Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church U.S.A, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Used with permission)

mental space with multiple other conceptualizations of social and political identity that spoke to family obligations, ethnicity, gender, professional training, local origins, and other essential signifiers whose importance will vary from person to person. The Smiths, for example, shared with fellow missionaries Velva Brown and Laura Ward a sense of American identity that pushed them all to become regular and devoted listeners to W6XBE–KGEI. Consistent with their missionary identity, they also shared a devotion to the social gospel. For all their common ground, however, the California-born Brown, Iowa-born Smiths, and New England-born Ward embraced different US regional loyalties. Brown, the medical doctor, and Ward, the mathematics teacher, also had different professional identities, ones that could encourage identification with similarly trained professionals who might not be Americans at all. Perhaps most importantly, American missionaries – or anyone else for that matter – could navigate among the varying layers of their personal identity and emphasize the aspects that were most relevant

and useful to confronting whatever situation or challenge was immediately at hand.³⁵

Maybelle Smith offers an especially compelling example of how individuals navigate the multiple layers of their personal identity when faced with challenging circumstances. In November 1937, the recently erupted Sino-Japanese War reached her home in Ningbo. Nine bombs fell on the city and landed perilously close to the Smith residence, where Maybelle Smith was home alone. The explosions threw Smith into a wall and nearly off her feet. She recalled the doors in her home swinging wildly, windows breaking, and items flying off the shelves as she struggled to keep her footing while running for cover. As a Presbyterian, she expressed relief that all the Christians who experienced the bombing survived. She expressed her gratitude to "our Baptist friends" who offered her help and shelter at their compound, which was more removed from the bombing. To further protect themselves, Smith and her fellow Ningbo missionaries seized on their American identity. "Among other precautions we put up more flags, had them flying from every building as well as being on the roofs for the airplanes to see," Smith wrote to friends and family in the United States. "We sewed American flags until we felt like Betsy Ross herself, though really she only had 13 stars to sew on and we had forty-eight."³⁶ By choosing to display American flags prominently instead of, say, Christian crucifixes, Maybelle Smith made an obvious and practical decision that her status as an American in China offered better protection from the looming danger than did her status as a Christian. This ease with which American missionaries such as Smith could navigate between the manifestations of their religious and national identities suggests how closely connected the two were for many Americans.

This is not to suggest there is never conflict or tension among a person's layered senses of identity. The American missionary Maud Russell, for example, often found her sense of Christian values inconsistent with her own government's foreign policy in China. In these cases her identity as a Christian was not necessarily congruent with her identity as an American in China. The anguish Russell felt over such conflicted feelings is testament to the fact that personal identities can indeed come into conflict within a single individual, who must then choose which sense of self should be privileged when confronting a difficult situation.³⁷ Generally speaking, however, the close historical ties that existed between Protestant Christianity and American national identity helped mute that potential conflict. Puritan John Winthrop's seventeenth-century profession that the new Anglo settlement in

North America would serve as a Christian-based “city upon a hill” long symbolized for many Americans the sense of transformative moral purpose the United States should claim in the world. This explicitly religious morality became deeply intertwined with the emergence of an American nation, and evangelical Protestantism has long remained an integral part of American politics and identity.³⁸ Even as evangelical Protestantism increasingly came under attack in the 1920s and 1930s – including from within the social gospel-influenced missionary community itself – widespread convictions in the superior moral purpose of the United States remained a central component of American national identity that extended beyond the devoutly religious.

To be sure, American missionaries distinguished themselves with their motivation to proselytize in a foreign country like China. Most Americans never set foot outside of the United States and had little inclination to do so. Even so, these missionaries and country-bound Americans often shared an ideal of the United States as a superior nation with a transformative global mission. In a nation where a majority identified themselves as regular church-goers, the steady donations that flowed to missionary work from congregations throughout the country reflected, at least in part, that sense of common purpose. If some missionaries felt somewhat estranged from their home country, it was not necessarily because they felt less American. Such feelings often emerged from perception that the United States itself was becoming less American due to perceived trends of secularization, moral decline, and diminishing spirituality.³⁹

Actually, an American missionary in China discontented with American cultural developments did not sound too different from any other homegrown critic in the US. “Can anything good come out of Hollywood?” XMHD’s Aimee Millican once mused with an implicit reference to that sense of moral decline.⁴⁰ Still, this more religiously informed perspective about American society could not be extricated from a missionary’s corollary sense of themselves as Americans. “We are born and raised with certain tastes, certain ways,” explained one missionary serving more recently in Ecuador. “You cannot eradicate those by living in a foreign country and I would be foolish to try.... I am an American.”⁴¹

In the China field, this intertwining of missionary purpose with American identity had significant political ramifications. The China mission movement succeeded in cultivating a popular image of China as a “special friend” of the United States on the verge of becoming a “Christian civilization” in the American image and deserving of

American support. China, they argued, provided an ideal setting for the United States to pursue its self-ascribed transformative global mission, and the missionary movement was the ideal vehicle for that pursuit. Practically speaking, this image helped churches raise funds from like-minded domestic congregations. More broadly, the popular embrace of this idea of a missionary-cultivated Sino-American “special relationship” became intertwined with the outlooks and policies advocated by the American diplomatic corps in China. While diplomats and missionaries did not always see eye to eye on matters of policy, there was enough of a shared worldview and enough former missionaries filled diplomatic roles in China that the line between missionary and official views could often be blurred.⁴²

The American missionary movement also forged close ties to the China’s Nationalist regime. Chiang Kai-shek himself ostensibly converted to Christianity in 1931. In 1927, as Chiang was trying to consolidate his power and secure firm control over China after years of civil war, he married Song Meiling, the American-educated middle daughter of one of China’s wealthiest and most powerful – and Christian – families. Chiang’s sordid past included ties to Shanghai’s underworld, multiple wives, and more than a few concubines. Chiang’s would-be future in-laws were concerned. At the same time, the prominent Song family also understood that Chiang’s star was rising in China. In exchange for permission to marry Song Meiling, Chiang promised to study Christianity and convert. American missionaries welcomed his marriage into the Christian Song family, accepted his conversion gesture at face value, and anticipated even greater gains in their proselytizing now that China’s leader and his wife were practicing Christians.⁴³

Chiang, for his part, understood the political advantages of cooperating with American missionaries. In 1934 – the same year as XMHD’s licensing – the Nationalists began giving the self-supporting American missionary movement greater leeway in pursuing much needed reform programs in China’s countryside. Chiang’s beleaguered and financially strapped regime allowed the (mostly) politically moderate missionary movement to pursue necessary rural reform and public health initiatives, which also generated good press for him in the United States along the way. Chiang, who usually avoided emphasizing his Christian faith to his Chinese constituents, had no such qualms when addressing an American audience. Initial missionary concerns about forging too close a political relationship with the Nationalists largely dissipated as missionaries embraced the idea of a Christian Chinese leader against the backdrop of their own growing disgust with Japan’s China policies.

Looking to legitimate their work in China, the American missionary movement welcomed the official blessings for their reform programs and by 1936 moved into strong support and cooperation with the Nationalist regime.⁴⁴

These mutually beneficial connections carried over to XMHD. After listening to the broadcast of a special New Year's program in 1936, Chiang's prominent wife, Song Meiling, dined with the station's musical director and cofounder Aimee Millican. They discussed future possibilities for Nationalist-XMHD cooperation. "Madame Chiang" and other prominent Nationalist regime members soon gave XMHD their blessing, and the Chinese Central News agency started publicizing XMHD's programs. That practice, Millican noted, reflected a stark reversal from the agency's previous refusal to publicize XMHD. The well-promoted broadcasts included a talk by the prominent wife of Zhang Qun, China's Minister of Foreign Affairs and close friend of Chiang Kai-shek. "Our program went off in grand style," Aimee Millican concluded, "and was one of the biggest things in the Christian movement."⁴⁵ In return, XMHD promoted the Chiangs as model Christians and offered to send interested listeners two Christian pamphlets, "My Religion" and "My Spirituality," authored by Meiling Song and Chiang Kai-shek, respectively. XMHD's *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* also publicized Chiang's essay entitled "My Spiritual Conception of Good Friday." The numerous requests XMHD received for copies of the Chiangs' Christian writings testified to their personal popularity within the missionary movement. "We do appreciate Madame Chiang Kai-shek and her step toward God," missionary D.K. Sheets wrote to the station on behalf of himself and his wife early 1937. "Our prayers follow her and her noble husband."⁴⁶

With the Sino-Japanese War on the horizon, the American missionary movement had already chosen sides. While visiting Beijing in the summer of 1936, Aimee Millican expressed concern about the expanding Japanese presence in north China. "If one does not think too much," she caustically remarked, "one can be very happy in beautiful Peiping [Beijing]." The radio missionary was hopeful that Japan had reached the limits of its expansion. "After all, the Japanese can't swallow China," she assured her daughter a year before hostilities erupted. "It would be like an ant trying to swallow a camel."⁴⁷ Millican's sense of personal commitment to Chiang Kai-shek also increased on the eve of the war. When soldiers loyal to anti-Japanese former warlord Zhang Xueliang kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in December 1936, Millican was impressed that Chiang allegedly requested a Bible when his life was hanging in the

balance.⁴⁸ Chiang escaped with his life, in large part by promising to fight the Japanese at the next provocation.

That provocation came outside Beijing in July 1937 and, as Chiang promised, China and Japan went to war. By this time, there was little doubt where the sympathies of American missionaries and their Christian broadcasting initiatives lay. In the context of war, the inextricable mix of Christian religious and American national identities that politicized Christian broadcasting now positioned XMHD as a distinctly American radio station with a distinctly anti-Japanese perspective, placing the station in the cross-hairs of the Japanese during this Sino-Japanese War.

Christian broadcasting and the Sino-Japanese War

The Millicans, along with Elleroy and Maybelle Smith, were among the many American missionaries who witnessed the expanding Sino-Japanese conflict from an especially close vantage point. The war began when Chinese and Japanese troops stationed in close proximity near Beijing clashed in July 1937 after months of rising tensions between them. Upon realizing that Japan's price for ending the fighting meant more concessions, by August Chiang decided he had little choice but to pursue a full-blown war against Japan.⁴⁹ Stuck in Qingdao when the fighting reached Shanghai in August, the Millicans and Smiths were unnerved by the news coming out of that distant city, especially after hearing that Frank Rawlinson, a close family friend and editor of the missionary journal *Chinese Recorder*, had been killed by the bombs accidentally dropped on the International Settlement. Frank Millican ultimately succeeded Rawlinson as editor of the journal.⁵⁰

Against all advice, the Millicans insisted on returning to their apartment in Shanghai in September. Fighting still afflicted the area around the International Settlement. The Smiths, traveling with the Millicans from Qingdao, were eager to continue on to their own home in Ningbo, but found themselves temporarily stranded in Shanghai when travel further south proved impossible. Thinking the worst had passed by the time they arrived in Shanghai, the Smiths and Millicans witnessed far more bloodshed than they ever expected from the "grandstand seats" of the Millican apartment. The Smiths described their days and nights as "full of terror." Sporadic gunfire became routine, and explosions regularly shook the entire apartment. Sleep was made more difficult by the fear of being hit by a stray bullet or piece of shrapnel. Japanese planes constantly circled overhead and dive-bombed their targets. The Smiths

shuddered at the “awful noise” of the bombings, then watched with trepidation the smoke rising from the ensuing rubble. “We actually saw with our own eyes the bombs leave the planes,” the Smiths wrote in a letter to their friends and family in the United States. “How the Chinese soldiers could stand up under this merciless bombardment from the air is beyond any of us to understand.”⁵¹

The ordeal took a particularly heavy toll on Aimee Millican. As she predicted, the Japanese “ant” did indeed have trouble swallowing the Chinese “camel.” The result, however, was a stalemate in which an overstretched Japan could not defeat the Chinese government, which had retreated to distant Chongqing where it established a wartime capital. With that western city sitting beyond the reach of the Japanese forces, a war of attrition unfolded. By the end of 1937 with no end to the fighting in sight, Aimee Millican looked and felt older. By her own account, the color had drained from her face, her eyes looked tired, and she suffered from insomnia. After the excitement and the adrenalin rush that accompanied the darkest days of fighting passed, Millican felt a sinking depression take hold after the fighting moved westward and the long-term implications of what transpired in and around Shanghai became clear. To Millican, the “emotional drag” of this realization was the “hardest part of the war.” “We see the awful cost in spirit as well as in materials,” Millican explained to her daughter. Millican made an effort to visit wounded soldiers everyday and described what she saw around her simply and concisely as “broken bones, broken furniture.”⁵²

Sympathy for the Chinese easily manifested itself as hatred of the Japanese. “They do not want me even to turn on the Tokyo radio news reports,” Millican wrote of her cohort of friends with whom she rode out the early hostilities in Qingdao. “It makes them mad.” Like so many other Americans of the period (and as the next chapter explores in greater detail), they identified Japanese news as an amalgamation of lies, half-truths, and misrepresentations. In Millican’s view, those news reports simply fueled “the resentment and bitter words spoken about the Japanese.” The Millicans rooted for the United States to confront Japan, and used shortwave radio to receive reports from China’s wartime capital in Chongqing. In 1939, they even purchased a shortwave radio for some of their financially strapped converts so they, too, could listen to these official broadcasts. This action came at a time when the Japanese were attempting to control the news reaching China and undermine Chiang’s government by establishing collaborationist Chinese regimes to administer the Japanese-occupied territories. The Millican’s effort to

put their Chinese acquaintances into contact with the wartime regime's news broadcasts was an indisputable and overtly political act.⁵³

Christian radio broadcasts offered an even more obvious and public challenge to Japan. The initial source of those wartime religious broadcasts was actually the secular American station XMHA, not XMHD. XMHD had been knocked off the air at the beginning of the war – not by the fighting, but by a typhoon that blew its powerful antenna masts off the high building on which they stood. With the fighting engulfing Shanghai shortly thereafter and rooftop snipers positioned themselves to pick off easy targets, no repairmen would dare venture to the top of the building to fix the damage. The loss of XMHD during the crisis was keenly felt in the missionary community. As a gesture of solidarity, Shanghai's XMHA offered time on its airwaves each Sunday evening for broadcasts directed toward Christian missionaries stationed throughout the vast countryside. These programs sought to provide missionaries with the most up-to-date news and war information available in Shanghai.⁵⁴

XMHA's Christian broadcasts adopted a predictably anti-Japanese tone. As the next chapter documents, the Japanese despised the American-owned station due to the deliberately anti-Japanese emphasis of its programming, particularly its news broadcasts. The fact that XMHA's broadcasts enjoyed a 5,500 mile transmission range further infuriated Japan. In this regard, the pro-Chinese sponsors of the missionary broadcasts found an ideal partner in the anti-Japanese XMHA. The National Christian Council (NCC), which was affiliated with the YMCA, produced the programs. On the surface, both the YMCA and NCC were multinational interdenominational Christian organizations dedicated to Christian conversion and social gospel work in China. Although not established as narrowly American organizations, Americans occupied leadership roles and a prominent overall presence in both groups. In addition, both groups had also forged close ties with China's now-beleaguered Nationalist regime. Considering XMHA's anti-Japanese pedigree, its decision to donate time to an avidly pro-Chinese NCC was hardly surprising.⁵⁵

The more than forty broadcasts between September 1937 and June 1938 offered subtle but nonetheless palpable critiques of the Japanese. These programs included the most up-to-date news out of Shanghai, complimented by reports gathered from missionary contacts located throughout the country. Consequently, listeners heard countless tales of haggard and starving refugees fleeing the fighting. They learned of refugee camps swelled beyond capacity and relief workers struggling

to keep up. Listeners heard reports of mission hospitals overflowing with dying and wounded, and of bombs targeting innocent civilians. It was an increasingly grim picture. These descriptions rarely mentioned the Japanese by name. They did not need to. When one program from March 27, 1938 somewhat vaguely referred to “foreign soldiers living in the church and burning up the furniture,” the perpetrators’ identity required no further clarification. Another broadcast paid homage to the “people of China in their hour of suffering.” In reference to those Chinese people, the announcer also asked listeners in a generalized tone to remember “to pray without bitterness for their enemies, as Christ himself did.”⁵⁶

Still, the NCC broadcasts avoided the racially charged imagery or blanket condemnations of the Japanese preferred by many other Americans during this dark period in US-Japanese relations. Instead, some broadcasts appealed to the decency of the Japanese people, who certainly could not countenance the violence their country waged in China. “If only the people of Japan knew what was taking place in Hankow [Hankou], in Canton [Guangzhou] and Nanking [Nanjing] and other places,” the announcer of one of the first programs claimed in September 1937. Some Japanese apparently did, or at least that was the suggestion when a broadcast in early 1938 publicized a donation made by a US-based Japanese citizen who was troubled by the news from China. Another broadcast from October 1937 suggested that Christians pray for the wayward Japanese soldiers and officers who had dealt “death and destruction to the Chinese.” To make its point, the broadcast quoted Jesus Christ himself: “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.”⁵⁷

Missionary broadcaster Earle Ballou, a regular Sunday host of the NCC’s XMHA broadcasts, consciously kept his explicit personal antagonisms toward Japan out of his broadcasts. Instead, his critiques were more general. “There is suffering and sorrow, terror and destitution everywhere,” he exclaimed without mentioning Japan by name on his March 13, 1938 broadcast.⁵⁸ Off the air, Ballou – a Yale-educated missionary who also served on the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions – offered a far blunter assessment of Japanese culpability. He contributed a chapter to a 1939 book that recounted missionary experiences in wartime China. Published primarily for British and North American audiences, his article relayed accounts of Japanese soldiers sacking villages, burning homes and food stores, and pillaging the countryside. He explicitly compared Japanese soldiers to cold-blooded murderers. No NCC announcer – Ballou or any other – ever dared to offer over the air this type of specific and devastating indictment.⁵⁹

The restrained tone adopted by the NCC broadcasts served a dual purpose. In part, the NCC framed its criticisms in a way that allowed its message to remain consistent with its Christian-inspired view of universal love and brotherhood. At the same time, by avoiding a blunt and explicit lambasting of all Japanese, the NCC may have helped protect the countless missionaries who resided in Japanese-occupied territory. As it stood, the US diplomatic corps received a steady stream of complaints from American missionaries mistreated at the hands of the Japanese army. In two incidents that occurred close together in early 1941, the Japanese bombed two American mission compounds in the Fuzhou area, despite having been provided with maps that clearly identified them as American property at the outset of the war.⁶⁰ Although it is only speculation, what if the NCC proffered more polarizing rhetoric over its broadcasts? Might the advancing Japanese troops have been motivated to inspire more “accidents” and “misunderstandings” when encountering the missionaries that the NCC claimed to speak to, as well as for?

That restraint aside, the missionaries’ vehement opposition to Japanese policies could not be entirely camouflaged. At the beginning of 1939, XMHA’s technicians helped complete the repairs that put XMHD back on the air. The political significance of this ongoing cooperation with the anti-Japanese XMHA could not have escaped the notice of the Japanese. Broadcasting once more, XMHD continued the pattern of offering sharp albeit implicit criticisms of Japan. One Chinese convert broadcast a personal story in 1940 that detailed his family’s travails during the 1937 battle for Nanjing and the hardships his elderly parents endured as refugees. The story itself never mentioned Japan by name but the trauma described could not be taken as anything less than an implicit indictment of the Japanese actions that caused the chaos now remembered in some quarters as the Nanjing Massacre, and in others as the Rape of Nanjing. “The forces of evil in the world today seem almost overwhelming” and “mighty storms of wickedness are sweeping about us,” Wisconsin-born and University of Chicago-educated Baptist missionary Sterling Beath explained in one February 1939 broadcast. Christian radio in general and XMHD in particular could help missionaries and Chinese alike “combat the powers of darkness and of sin,” Beath claimed. Spoken while describing China’s wartime difficulties, Beath no doubt meant Japan and not some generic threat of evil. The dislike was apparently mutual, because when the United States and Japan went to war less than two years later, the Japanese apprehended Beath and held him as a prisoner of war.⁶¹

The station's secular news broadcasts further positioned XMHD against the Japanese. The *North China Daily News*, a British-owned enterprise, sponsored the broadcasts. The self-proclaimed "Voice of Democracy" openly opposed Japanese imperialism. XMHD's facilitation of the newspaper's broadcast reports, frequently perceived as critical of Japan, compounded the conviction that the Christian broadcasting outlet was quite partisan against the Japanese. The station's newsletter even urged listeners to purchase a subscription to the *North China Daily News*. Even more infuriating from the Japanese perspective was the fact that XMHD's restored signal could be heard all the way to Japan.⁶²

Perhaps XMHD's most blatant political maneuver came not from an actual broadcast but from what might otherwise appear to be a superficial ownership and registration change. When the station went on the air again in 1939, it transferred its ownership from a Chinese to an American within the SCBA. It was a politically deft move. XMHD had initially went on the air in 1934 as a Chinese-owned station at the height of the Nationalist regime's aggressive efforts to keep foreign stations off the airwaves and show favor to Chinese-owned stations. Those efforts, as Chapter 3 explored, even went to the point of jamming the signals of recalcitrant foreign broadcasters who thought the International Settlement provided protection from Chinese authority. After 1937, however, Chinese ownership was a disadvantage. The Japanese silenced Chinese radio stations in the occupied areas. The International Settlement, where XMHD was located, provided no refuge for Chinese broadcasters either. To avoid any potential usurpation of its authority by Japan, the Shanghai Municipal Council cooperated with the Japanese to shut down any Chinese-owned stations in the Settlement that broadcast anti-Japanese material. The Shanghai Municipal Police insisted that the manager of any Chinese station allowed to remain on the air sign a rather broadly worded pledge in which they promised to "refrain from broadcasting...any plays, songs, speeches, or anything of a political nature whatever or anything which the Municipal Police considers objectionable."⁶³

By the terms of extraterritoriality, however, the SMC could not enforce this same mandate against American-owned stations. The right of extraterritoriality put Americans under the jurisdiction of their own country's laws. As such, the SMC had no authority to move against XMHD if it did not break any American laws. Consequently, American radio stations enjoyed much greater freedom in deciding the types of programs they chose to broadcast, even if they were anti-Japanese in tenor.

Additionally, in times of trouble, American ownership also allowed the station to appeal for support from the American government, itself opposed to Japanese policies in China. The ownership change, in short, was transparent effort to protect the station's programming from Japanese machinations.

XMHD's shift to American ownership ultimately proved ineffective. Just as American-owned stations learned earlier in the 1930s, the legal protections provided by the International Settlement's peculiar autonomous status could not withstand determined opposition. In the early 1930s that determined opposition came in the form of a new Chinese regime trying to consolidate control over a country and its airwaves. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, increasingly desperate Japanese authorities took over that role. China refused to surrender, Japan proved unable to triumph over China, and the international opposition to Japanese actions in China mounted as the war dragged on longer than expected. The ant was choking on the camel. Increasingly anxious for victory, Japan found the unending war stretching its limited resources dangerously thin. The Japanese responded by redoubling their efforts to smother communications and media perceived as anti-Japanese and prone to inspire resistance. Censorship of the mail, attempts to stifle the print media, pro-Japanese propaganda campaigns, radio seizures, and widespread jamming of hostile radio stations were among the chosen retaliatory strategies.⁶⁴ Because of its missionary pedigree, programming, and wartime actions, XMHD became a prime target for the Japanese.

By April 1940, XMHD found itself being jammed. The station appealed in writing to the Broadcast Radio Supervisory Office that Japan had established in Shanghai in 1938 for the expressed purpose of silencing broadcasts Japan found offensive. This letter, sent to the attention of the Supervisory Office's head Major Asano Kazuwo, offered assurances that XMHD "had no desire to do anything that might have a deleterious effect on relations between the United States and Japan."⁶⁵ Asano ignored the appeal. XMHD then approached the American Consulate in Shanghai, which brought the matter to the attention of the Japanese Consulate General in Shanghai and the Japanese Embassy itself. Negotiations went nowhere. As the Japanese moved into French Indochina in September 1940, further straining US-Japanese relations, XMHD continued to be the target of Japanese malfeasance. The American-owned and anti-Japanese *China Press* hypothesized that XMHD's *North China Daily News*-sponsored news reports must have motivated the Japanese jamming campaign. "No

other reason seems to be known for the interference with XMHD," the paper claimed.⁶⁶

In fact, news comprised only one aspect of Japanese grievances. Although the anti-Japanese content of XMHD's broadcasts provided the primary cause for concern, another concern was the station's strong signal. It carried those disagreeable programs across China, throughout the Pacific and even to Japan. This combination was intolerable. After making XMHD sweat out the interference for months, the Japanese authorities finally promised XMHD "protection." Asano and an unnamed Japanese embassy official informed the station's management that the interference would stop once it registered with the Supervisory Office and, more importantly, reduced its transmission power to keep its broadcasts restricted to the city limits (where the American population was already irredeemably anti-Japanese). For the better part of 1940, XMHD resisted complying with these demands and hoped for a better resolution that might preserve its signal strength and autonomy, but it was to no avail. By November, XMHD finally acquiesced to the Japanese terms. The interference ceased by the end of the month. China's flagship Christian broadcasting station that once blanketed the Asia-Pacific region with its Christian programming had been silenced in all but the International Settlement of Shanghai.⁶⁷

By the end of 1940, the politicization of XMHD and religious broadcasting in China was complete. Those earlier visions of XMHD as a powerful instrument to spread the Christian gospel throughout China meant little on the eve of the Pacific War. The Japanese deployed jamming to mute this missionary-connected station. The religious ideals promoted by Christian broadcasting in China were not Japan's target. XMHD's fate was tied to the political choices the religious broadcasters made. These choices positioned XMHD and religious broadcasting in China explicitly behind the Chinese, behind the Americans, and against the Japanese. The rhetoric of universal brotherly Christian love that fueled Christian broadcasting endeavors fell short. By the eve of the Pacific War, XMHD and religious broadcasting in China was a partisan and politicized broadcasting endeavor that paid a price for its outward identification with the American policies that increasingly strained US-Japanese relations in the early 1940s. That the Japanese equated XMHD with a distinctly American and obviously political broadcasting outlet should not be surprising. "After all," one American missionary broadcaster observed during what otherwise appeared as an apolitical XMHD program about the Bible, "none of us can escape our backgrounds."⁶⁸

* * *

In the early 1940s, surface appearances suggested that in just over six years Christian broadcasting in China had strayed far from its roots. XMHD had been established in 1934 as the flagship station for missionary-inspired religious broadcasting initiatives sweeping China. It was to be an apolitical messenger designed to bring the Christian gospel to millions of Chinese. After years of missionary frustrations over the failure to win sufficient converts, XMHD and its sister stations promised to harness the power of broadcasting and swell the numbers of Chinese who would embrace Christianity. Six years later, XMHD garnered attention not for its proselytizing successes, but as a target of sustained Japanese jamming. By 1940, Christian broadcasting had forged close ties with the Chinese Nationalist regime, shifted its ownership over to an American, collaborated with one of the most notorious anti-Japanese American stations in Shanghai, and offered up its own critiques of Japanese policies. This repositioning of Christian broadcasting occurred in the context of the Sino-Japanese War. It was a context where China's Nationalist regime vowed fight on while the United States offered the Chinese government increasing support. Going into the 1940s, the political meaning of this shift was impossible to miss. At its founding in 1934, XMHD justified its operations as a multinational, apolitical, and interdenominational radio initiative. By 1940 XMHD and Christian broadcasting chose sides in the Sino-Japanese War. It jumped into the international conflict that subsumed China in the late 1930s, and the Japanese jammed it as a hostile radio station.

Upon closer inspection, however, the transformation of XMHD and Christian broadcasting was actually not that dramatic. Christian broadcasting's dual ties to both the Chinese and American interests informed its operations since its founding. The SCBA began, first and foremost, as a collaboration among American missionaries and Chinese converts. The American missionaries involved in this operation viewed themselves not just as generic Christians, but also as Americans. Their Christianity was an integral part of their identity as Americans. They identified with other Christians of other nationalities, to be sure. Still, these missionaries never stopped identifying with Americans, including American officialdom to which they looked to protect their interests. American missionaries shared with other Americans typical views about radio and its potential power to advance progress and civilization in the non-Western world. Claims that technology's contribution

to progress and civilization brought humanity closer to God reflected a strain of thought deeply rooted in the Western and American cultural tradition. These cultural and intellectual currents informed XMHD from the beginning.

Against that backdrop, the American missionary movement's strengthening ties to the Chinese Nationalist regime shaped the broadcasting operation. The prewar agricultural, educational, and public health initiatives led by missionaries corresponded to the Nationalists' desire to pursue moderate reform programs that would alleviate China's problems without revolutionizing the countryside, where the Nationalists faced a communist threat. Missionary programs also allowed the financially struggling Nationalists to take advantage of the resources the missionary movement was willing to devote to those reform efforts. These ties carried over to Christian broadcasting, not only through the government's willingness to license the stations, but also to have Nationalist officials all the way up to Chiang Kai-shek and his wife Meiling Song contribute programming. These basic foundations of Christian broadcasting in China predated the Sino-Japanese War.

In the end, Christian broadcasting itself did not change as much as the context in which it operated did. The Sino-Japanese War mobilized the Chinese to fight Japan, soured popular American opinion toward Japan, and put the United States on its own road to war against Japan. The American missionaries involved in Christian broadcasting actually thought little different from most other Americans, lay or secular, who had watched this Sino-Japanese fight unfold. The SCBA, with its mix of Chinese and American directors and staff, expressed anti-Japanese sentiments that echoed the majority of Americans and Chinese who were equally appalled by the Japan's war against China.

The roots of the overtly politicized Christian broadcasting were present at the outset. It took the Sino-Japanese War to tease out that politicization in its entirety. XMHD's original choice to register as a Chinese station was a practical political choice that fit the context of the early 1930s. The subsequent decision to change that registration to American in 1939 was itself a thinly disguised political choice designed to thwart Japanese control; it provided the station with greater broadcasting freedom, including the freedom to criticize Japan in the context of the Sino-Japanese War. Consequently, the Japanese authorities jammed XMHD. It was the political consequence of the political choices XMHD made throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s.

XMHD and Christian broadcasting provide another example of how radio was beholden to its context. For all their complexities and

various identities, the American missionaries behind XMHD and other Christian broadcasting outlets in China were indisputably American. As Americans, they forged ties with the China's Nationalist regime and US officialdom as both countries' relations with Japan soured. This convergence of international politics and the American missionary movement fueled the tensions between the missionaries and the Japanese in China. The ways in which these wider contexts shaped the development of Christian broadcasting during the 1930s all but negated any chance radio had to further the Christianization of China as XMHD's founders originally envisioned. Christian broadcasting itself became a casualty of Japan's war with China. Like the other American radio initiatives in China explored in this study, XMHD and Christian broadcasting took to the air with its supporters convinced of the revolutionary and utopian-minded changes it promised to bring to China. Once more, high-minded ideas about the consequences of radio's proliferation proved to be little more than empty rhetoric. Christian broadcasting in China was, in the end, as political as it was religious, and as hostile to the Japanese as the Japanese were to it. The experience of XMHD and American Christian broadcasting in China yet again underscores the unrealistic expectations that continually followed Americans and radio into China.

6

“Unofficial Radio Hell-Raiser”: Radio News and US-Japanese Conflict on the Eve of the Pacific War

As radio newscaster Carroll Duard Alcott was being chauffeured to work on the evening of January 12, 1940, he was ambushed. A car carrying two uniformed members of the Japanese military barreled in front of Alcott's rickshaw as it moved through the streets of Shanghai. Having trapped the rickshaw, Alcott's terrified puller bolted on foot down a nearby alley. A lieutenant grabbed the American radio personality with the intention of forcing him into his vehicle. Asked to confirm his identity, Alcott denied he was the man they sought. When a moment of doubt entered the officer's mind, the 220 pound Alcott broke free and hightailed it down the same alley his puller used. Alcott arrived by foot at XMHA, an American-owned radio station, somewhat out of breath, but in time to deliver his scheduled broadcast.¹

Alcott's scary encounter with the Japanese had become an all-too-ordinary part of his life in wartime Shanghai. Even before he joined XMHA in 1938, the outspoken Alcott – previously a reporter for Shanghai's American-owned *China Press* – had become skilled at dodging his enemies. On one such occasion in 1933, as Alcott was dining at a Shanghai restaurant, a Japanese gunman was discovered crouched behind a large potted plant purportedly preparing to shoot Alcott when he left the establishment. In a later incident after Alcott started working at XMHA, the newscaster found himself in a comically slow automobile chase amidst Shanghai's traffic. He was pursued by gunmen who, though driving in slow motion, still managed to lose control of their vehicle, hop the sidewalk, bounce off a utility pole, and slam into a

board fence, which disabled their vehicle. With good reason, the broadcaster took the precaution of hiring a bodyguard, wearing a bulletproof vest, carrying a gun, and driving in an armored car. Sometimes, when threats seemed imminent, he received a police escort. His outspoken and fervent anti-fascism put the newscaster on several enemies lists in Shanghai, including those of pro-Nazi Germans, White Russians, and pro-fascist Italians (it was the latter group that piloted their car into the fence during that farcical assassination attempt). However, it was the Japanese who wanted Alcott silenced more than anyone. He used his popular newscasts to relentlessly castigate Japan's heavy-handed imperialism in China, and he refused to back down when threatened or confronted. Proud of his intractable stance, Alcott proclaimed himself to be a "sort of unofficial radio hell-raiser with the Axis in the Orient."²



Figure 6.1 Carroll Alcott, c. 1940 (Courtesy of Paul French)

Carroll Alcott had, in fact, become entwined with a wider news war that pitted the United States against Japan. This news war revolved around the Japanese-American struggle to dominate the English-language news broadcasts heard over China and wider East Asia's airwaves. The Americans and Japanese both worked to ensure that radio news reflected their respective but ultimately incompatible wants, needs, and interests. For his part, Alcott insisted his newscasts, unfailingly critical of the Japanese, reflected a fair assessment of the obvious facts. Alcott contended that Japanese journalism was little better than shameless political propaganda supporting inexcusable Japanese aggression, a view shared by many other Americans. Japanese officials countered with their own accusations of an anti-Japanese bias inherent in American journalism that threatened legitimate Japanese interests by willfully spreading misinformation. Stifling such deliberately misleading news was, in the Japanese opinion, fair game. The eruption of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 intensified the Japanese pursuit of this goal once news originating from and about the warfront garnered increased attention. With Japan's war in China bringing the United States and Japan into increasing conflict over what entailed each country's legitimate interests in East Asia, the perceived stakes of controlling the airwaves and the news further multiplied. Consequently, Carroll Alcott and XMHA frequently stood on the receiving end of Japanese efforts to eliminate critical American reporting during the war. At the same time, Japanese authorities also jammed the newscasts of American short-wave station W6XBE-KGEI. Both XMHA and W6XBE-KGEI stood on the front lines of a US-Japanese battle to control the news that reached audiences in China and wider East Asia.

The listeners mattered in this news war. American listeners brought to their radio listening in China a clearly defined set of expectations and sense of entitlement. These Americans expected unimpeded access to familiar American media. Tailored to those expectations, XMHA and W6XBE-KGEI's newscasts successfully engaged the political, cultural, social, and economic sensitivities of their targeted American audience in China. Japanese authorities seeking to regulate radio in occupied China had decidedly more negative reactions to these same newscasts. Their efforts to suppress American news infuriated the legions of the dedicated American listeners that counted on those programs. The US diplomatic establishment and the Shanghai Municipal Council that governed Shanghai's International Settlement wondered how far to go in supporting American listener complaints about jamming when the stakes in East Asia seemed so much greater than quibbles over radio.

With both authority and prestige at stake, neither could turn a blind eye to the Japanese sabotage afflicting the airwaves, nor could they allow radio to complicate the more pressing diplomatic concerns surrounding Japan's war in China. Throughout this ordeal, Japanese and Americans consistently engaged radio news in a way that legitimized and reinforced the pre-existing antagonisms each group held toward one another as their two countries marched toward war.³

Spreading the news: Americans in wartime China

When China and Japan went to war in 1937, Shantou-based missionary doctor Velva Brown was one of those Americans who immediately looked to radio news to provide valuable, even life-saving, information. The war was taking its toll on Shantou. Brown reported that the city residents living near Scott Thresher Memorial Hospital heard planes flying overhead and, not realizing it was a bombing raid, ran out to the streets to look at the spectacle. "[T]he bombs dropped into their midst," Brown lamented. Her hospital was subsequently overrun with large numbers of dead, wounded, and tales of the carnage. She tolerated daily sirens warning of impending air raids. More than a year into the war, she watched Chinese military forces prepare for their ultimately unsuccessful stand against the Japanese by digging trenches around Shantou. Within this context, Brown wrote home that she was grateful to have a working radio, "especially in this time when newspapers from Shanghai do not get here for weeks at a time, and the papers from Hong Kong are not very regular."⁴

As the sole radio owner in her compound at the war's outbreak, Velva Brown shouldered the responsibility to satisfy her colleagues' insatiable demand for radio news. Missionaries such as Velva Brown were a well-represented American constituency living throughout China, but often in more remote areas. Keeping apprised of the latest developments could be difficult in the best of times. The risks of being caught in the crossfire of the surrounding war and a desire to know what might come next in the conflict heightened the ever-present thirst for news among Americans such as Brown. "I have been giving time each evening as faithfully as I can when not needed at the hospital, and writing notes on the news reports from Nanking [Nanjing], Tokyo, Manila, and Shanghai," Brown noted. She also listened to shortwave newscasts from London, Berlin, and Australia. She then compiled about twelve pages of notes from those nightly newscasts and circulated them throughout her own mission before forwarding them on to other nearby radio-less

missions. Brown took this responsibility seriously. "It is getting on to time for Radio news so I will close now," Brown wrote as she wrapped up one of her many letters to home.⁵

Shanghai's American-owned XMHA was one of the most important sources of news for Brown. The 500-watt station broadcast over AM frequency 600 in Shanghai and, thanks to a shortwave simulcast, could be heard a far as 5,500 miles outside the city. Even before the war, XMHA had become one of the most successful American stations in Shanghai. Ulysses Severin "U.S." Harkson, President of the China-based Henningsen Produce Company, owned XMHA. Harkson's Henningsen Produce Company, initially an exporter of eggs, expanded into the dairy, ice cream, and confectionary business during the 1930s. While running the Henningsen company, Harkson invested more than 200,000 Chinese dollars to establish XMHA in the early 1930s. One American official referred to XMHA as Harkson's "hobby." In fact, XMHA complimented the Henningsen interests, especially as an advertising platform for the company's "Hazelwood" ice cream and candy bars. Carroll Alcott recalled that by the end of the 1930s some 500 shops in Shanghai sold Hazelwood products, with its "Eskimo Pies" even enjoying noticeable popularity among Chinese consumers.⁶

XMHA built its large and devoted audience by investing in state-of-the-art equipment and an impressive slate of programming. An agreement between RCA-Victor and XMHA designated the station's air-conditioned studios a sub-dealer for RCA-Victor equipment. Listeners could visit the station and shop for RCA products in relative comfort. From RCA itself, XMHA purchased a large library of electrical transcriptions of NBC and other programs popular in the US. This nearly 500-volume library of American radio entertainment was the only one of its kind in Shanghai. The station's Amateur Broadcast Contest gave amateur operators an opportunity to broadcast over the station, and Burleigh Cigarettes, an American-owned company, awarded special prizes to the winners. XMHA also worked with the local distributor of the Packard Motor Car Company, an American manufacturer of luxury cars, by producing a special broadcast from Packard's Shanghai showroom. The multiple newscasts it aired daily, produced in cooperation with the American-owned *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*, ranked among the station's most popular programs. This English-language newscast was the first of its kind in Shanghai to cover local, national, and international events.⁷

Shanghai-based US Trade Commissioner Viola Smith had, in fact, specifically referenced XMHA's popularity, in particular its newscasts, when lobbying for the establishment of a new shortwave station on

the American west coast to broadcast to China. The station's thriving operations by early 1937, Smith argued, demonstrated the existence of an enthusiastic American audience-in-waiting and a desperate need for a distinctly American source of news. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War later that same year and the recurring difficulties Americans had in receiving broadcasts from the United States prompted Smith to redouble her efforts to get such a station built. More than ever, Smith emphasized, Americans needed timely access to objective American radio news.⁸

The crises and hostilities erupting in both China and Europe during the 1930s, in fact, helped propel the growth of radio journalism. A relatively new medium still largely (if naively) untainted by the accusations of bias long attached to newspapers, American audiences in particular identified radio as their most reliable source of news. The novelty of live reports from multiple war fronts during the decade entranced listeners. American audiences used radio to follow the Japanese takeover of Manchuria during 1931–32. Italy's 1935 foray in Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War in 1936 enjoyed even more comprehensive coverage. Reports of Hitler's rise, culminating in the live coverage of the Munich Crisis in autumn of 1938, cemented radio's role as the preferred source of news among Americans. Americans were not alone in this regard. Radio news became a staple of broadcasting schedules in many other countries, including Britain, Germany, Japan, and China.⁹

Once war erupted between China and Japan, Americans such as Smith predictably turned to their radios. In light of the war's devastating impact on so much of China, XMHA's 5,500 mile transmission range gave listeners throughout the country the latest news about the war. Furthermore, the war disrupted existing postal and wired communications networks. Radio thereby provided the best tool to keep abreast about troop movements, battles, bombings, civilian casualties, streams of refugees, and the increasing challenges of securing daily necessities. For this reason, the outbreak of war in July 1937 helped send radio sales – especially sales of battery-operated radios – skyrocketing in Shanghai. The numbers of amateurs building homemade sets also jumped. According to one estimate, receiver ownership in Shanghai jumped from about one hundred thousand to several hundred thousand as a result of the conflict.¹⁰ For Americans such as Shanghai's Viola Smith and Shantou's Velva Brown, who both witnessed the war's effects firsthand, radio news could provide valuable information necessary to cope with the ever-increasing dangers of daily life.

The evidence of radio's surging popularity in the shadow of war was pervasive. Carroll Alcott expressed amazement at the common sight

of crowds gathered around any one of the radios broadcasting the latest news in Shanghai's public spaces. From beyond Shanghai, Alcott received hundreds of letters from Chinese and foreign listeners living in Japanese-occupied areas who depended on radio news to keep them informed. Viola Smith received letters as well. "Radio is the *only* way for us to hear from the outside world," wrote one Chinese doctor living in such an occupied area. Julia Morgan, a medical missionary based at Qilu [Cheeloo] University in Shandong, certainly agreed. "We keep informed by radio," she wrote to her father on August 16, 1937, just as Shandong came under relentless attack by the Japanese. Morgan was particularly unnerved when Shandong fell in December 1937. "We are extremely glad for our radio news," she wrote to her father, "otherwise we would feel very much isolated."¹¹

XMHA received special acclaim for its efforts as the fighting spread to Shanghai a month into the war. The station expanded its news broadcasts and transmitted without charge personal and business messages that could no longer be delivered via other disrupted communications networks. American residents, who had been vacationing outside of oppressively hot Shanghai when war erupted in July and were now cut off from the city, especially valued the lifeline provided by this service. "Daily these messages have been sent out" over XMHA, the missionary-published *China Journal* reported in September 1937, "and it must have proved of the greatest comfort and help to many to receive them during this time of unprecedented trouble." Elleroy and Maybelle Smith, the Ningbo-based and Shanghai-loving American missionary couple from Chapter 4 who had become devoted listeners to W6XBE-KGEI before the war, received one of those messages. Radio news alerted the Smiths to the horrendous and deadly bombardment of Shanghai just over a month into the war. Through XMHA, a friend urged them to postpone their next scheduled trip to a now dangerous Shanghai until the turmoil subsided. They remained riveted to their radio in the coming days and months. "Next door folks and ourselves rent a radio, installed at their place," Maybelle Smith recorded in her diary. "Get plenty of war news over it."¹²

XMHA left quite an impression. "XMHA will long be remembered in the hearts of these people during these stirring times," Viola Smith correctly predicted.¹³ Carroll Alcott, writing from the United States in 1943, praised the station's outreach to those stranded by the circumstances of war. Alcott, still a print journalist in 1937 who had yet to go to work for XMHA, recalled the station transmitting information regarding escape routes for those missionaries and businessmen trapped

behind the lines. He noted that the station not only “performed a great service to Occidentals in most parts of the country,” but also emphasized XMHA’s international importance in that it provided eyewitness news reports about the hostilities to the entire world via its shortwave transmissions.¹⁴ Even in distant Washington, American officials were well aware of the station’s important contribution to the safety of American nationals trapped in a war zone. Maxwell Hamilton, a high-ranking official in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs who admitted to being troubled by some of Alcott’s more provocative radio antics, could agree with Alcott on one particular point. XMHA, Hamilton wrote, “provides a very definite service to Americans residing in the interior of China by making available to them the latest news reports of events throughout the world.”¹⁵

American missionary William R. Johnson also looked to his radio to keep abreast of the confusing and fast-moving events in China. Johnson was a politically well-connected Methodist missionary who shared with so many other Americans that nearly insatiable desire for radio news as hostilities enveloped his base in Nanchang, China. He, like Velva Brown, was an advocate of the “social gospel” approach to missionary work. Prior to the war, Johnson’s efforts in China focused on agricultural reform projects that enjoyed the support of the Nationalist government and the philanthropic Rockefeller Foundation. The outbreak of the war destroyed the modestly successful “rural reconstruction” programs he oversaw and threw him into the dangers of China’s new wartime environment. Access to news became essential. “No papers have come through since the tenth of November,” Johnson wrote home in early 1938. “All the news is from radio.” The highlight of a dinner party he attended was that “we listened to the news from all over the world.” In his own home he placed his radio in his bedroom because of the convenience. “[I]t was closest to where the wires come in and some of the news broadcasts are late at night,” he wrote to his wife. Another time Johnson lamented that his work at the mission hospital ran late and he missed that evening’s news. Like Brown, Johnson took on the role of ad hoc news distributor, typing up the information he received from the news broadcasts and distributing those notes throughout his mission compound. While assisting at a refugee camp in China’s interior, Johnson lamented the absence of his radio. “It will be good,” the missionary wrote to his family, “to get out to where there is access to radio news again.”¹⁶

For many Americans, the sad fate of Frank Rawlinson, the popular editor of the missionary journal *Chinese Recorder*, underscored their

vulnerability in the chaos of this war. With six of his eight children residing in the United States at the war's outbreak, on August 3, 1937 Rawlinson wrote to assure them that despite the war's imminent spread to Shanghai, he saw no danger for himself. "If hostilities grown [sic], then Shanghai can hardly get away with out some sort of upset," Rawlinson acknowledged. Still, he felt safe living in a foreign-controlled portion of Shanghai. "You need not be troubled about us as we live in the French Concession where there are few if any Japanese," he assured them. "Fighting and riots are not likely to occur where we reside."¹⁷

Ten days later, as Rawlinson prophetically foresaw, the battle for Shanghai began. He did not survive. Hoping to secure a definitive defeat of China, Japan expanded the fighting to the city during the second week in August. The greater Shanghai area quickly became the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting and fiercest Chinese resistance. The close proximity of the fighting to the international settlements and the intertwined nature the city's three separate jurisdictions (the Chinese city, the International Settlement, and the French Concession) ensured that the violence would indeed spill over into the foreign-controlled areas. Stray bombs missed their targets, Chinese refugees poured into the foreign-controlled areas to escape the tremendous devastation impacting the outlying areas, and Japanese troops marched through the International Settlement to occupy "Japan town" and protect their nationals. In this chaos, on the second day of fighting two Chinese pilots mistakenly dropped bombs on both the International Settlement and French Concession, which were swelled with refugees trying to escape the fighting.¹⁸ The result was horrendous. With more than 1700 dead and 1400 wounded from these bombing blunders, the events of August 14, 1937 produced the worst inadvertent civilian bloodshed in wartime up to that point. The *New York Times* described the day's carnage as a "holocaust." The scene in the International Settlement was particularly gruesome, punctuated by blazing infernos, twisted corpses, and severed limbs littering the street. According to one account, a decapitated policeman who had been directing traffic when the bombs fell remained standing on the street corner, headless with his arms still elevated in the air. Not far from that spot Frank Rawlinson lay dead, killed by a piece of shrapnel that had pierced his heart. He just happened to be driving through the Settlement with his wife and daughter when he heard the roar of the plane, saw crowds gathering to look upward, and stepped out of his car to get a better view of what was happening. His wife and daughter survived. Rawlinson's other children received their

father's letter assuring them that he was in no danger shortly after they had been notified of his tragic end.¹⁹

Rawlinson's death, covered extensively in Shanghai's news media, served to warn other Americans how dangerously exposed they were. "Dr. Rawlinson's work and influence were felt far beyond his large circle of personal friends in Shanghai and China generally," the American *China Weekly Review* eulogized shortly after his death. Word of his death spread quickly. In Jiangxi province (located in China's south-eastern interior), missionary Margaret Thomson expressed her pain at the news. "We are dreadfully shocked of the news of Dr. Rawlinson's death from a bomb in Shanghai," Thomson wrote to her daughter in the United States about their family friend. The news of Rawlinson's death reached United States as well. The missionary William Johnson, a friend of Rawlinson's who was returning to China after spending his furlough in the United States, heard the news of the war's outbreak and then Rawlinson's subsequent death while on the journey back. "This made us anxious for news all the way across [the ocean]," he wrote as his ship neared Japan. "Everyone on board is anxious for real news from China," Johnson confirmed.²⁰

Many other Americans in China felt similarly. Radio news alerted Beijing-based missionary Grace Morrison Boynton to the war's outbreak. On the evening of July 7, 1937, she had heard in the distance the first Sino-Japanese exchanges of gunfire at the Marco Polo Bridge. Initially unsure of what to make of the commotion, Boynton soon learned that war erupted. Boynton taught English at Harvard-affiliated Yanjing (Yenching) University, a Protestant-based and social gospel-influenced institution of higher education. The radio she listened to actually belonged to her neighbor, a secular seventy-year-old American woman who ran a maternity clinic two doors down from the missionary. Although the war was fast approaching the city limits, Boynton's elderly neighbor had no intention of leaving Beijing. "I have only a few more years anyway," Boynton quoted her as saying during one of their radio listening get-togethers. "It doesn't matter how the end comes. And these women will need me more than ever if we actually get war conditions. So I'm staying." The war did arrive in full force within days, and radio news became an essential part of their daily routine amidst sniper fire and falling bombs. The two women remained glued to that radio receiver right up until the United States and Japan went to war in December 1941. "All the news is about war, war, war," Boynton wrote on August 25, 1939, "just like 1914."²¹

W6XBE–KGEI also helped satiate this tremendous American wartime demand for news. Devoted listener and missionary Maud Russell wrote from Guizhou in May 1940 that “no other station gives us news from as many sources as does KGEI.” An American writing from Tianjin that same year raved to W6XBE–KGEI’s parent company General Electric that “the news items are eagerly awaited by all of [the English speaking listeners in the area].” In April 1940, Vincent Morrison, an American missionary stationed in Zhejiang, wrote, “I have been listening to your news broadcasts for the past year and I must say they give me and my associates here quite a bit of comfort and relaxation. It is a pleasure to listen to Norman Page give out the news reports.” Viola Smith was also grateful, but still complained that the station’s evening news program generally reported news that the Americans had already read in their morning papers.²²

In the turmoil of war, these Americans seized on radio news as a means of keeping up with fast-moving events and making sense of what too often seemed like a senseless situation. American missionaries, officials, businessmen, and other expatriates gravitated toward American radio news because they believed it was more reliable and more objective than the other available English-language sources of radio news. The Japanese, however, perceived a threat to their own expansionist objectives that might materialize from widely broadcasted American news reports critical of Japan. For that reason the Japanese aggressively jammed the widely demanded American radio newscasts, and in the process introduced a new source of tension into the increasingly strained US-Japanese relationship.

California Jamming: W6XBE–KGEI and the news

In April 1939, Shanghai resident Walter Sullivan contacted Viola Smith about Japanese station XJOB’s jamming of W6XBE–KGEI. “I don’t know what can be done in the matter, but I can assure you that as long as this continues W6XBE may just as well shut down as far as this locality is concerned.” The interference infuriated Sullivan because W6XBE–KGEI provided “us Americans an opportunity of hearing broadcasts from home for which we have waited many years.” Ultimately, Sullivan discovered that the American station’s transmissions were a collateral casualty of the Japanese station’s attempt to jam a Chinese government station operating out of the Chinese wartime capital at Chongqing. XJOB’s operators quickly remedied the problem once personally confronted

by the irate Sullivan. The quick resolution, however, belied what was indeed a Japanese inclination to jam American stations.²³

Though the XJOB situation was quickly resolved, Sullivan's initial suspicion of Japanese malfeasance proved prophetic. In May 1939, two Japan-based shortwave stations, JZI and JZJ, began targeting W6XBE-KGEI's news broadcasts.²⁴ Japan's political elite had long been convinced that American and other Western news organizations betrayed a particular bias against Japan. Since the early twentieth century, these Japanese believed that the Western media fueled worldwide anti-Japanese sentiment. In Japanese eyes, the reporting by Western news agencies – the Associated Press, Reuters, and Havas – constantly and inappropriately emphasized Japan's "aggression" in China and disregard for international law. Japanese leaders wondered why Western news reports refused to acknowledge that China was a country critical to Japanese economic and strategic interests, making its chronic instability unacceptable to Japan. Shortwave broadcasting became a focal point of these concerns about international news during Japan's invasion and takeover of Manchuria during 1931–32; the Japanese government took to airwaves to counter the harsh international criticism the invasion provoked, while sharp criticism of the US became a mainstay of Japanese shortwave broadcasts for the duration of the decade. The visceral emotion that Western news reporting provoked from Japan was nicely captured later during the Pacific War. At that time, a radio broadcast from Japanese-occupied Batavia denounced offensive Australian news broadcasts as proving to the world that Australia was "a nation of idiots and pathological criminals."²⁵

Years of efforts to try and blunt Western news biases culminated in 1936 with the formation of "Domei." This Japanese news service enjoyed close ties to Japan's Imperial Army and relied on shortwave to break the Western stranglehold on international news. Indeed, the Japanese newsman Iwanaga Yukichi, who had been influential in Domei's founding, saw a world engulfed in a tremendous "propaganda war," and identified Domei as critical to Japan's success on that front. Once hostilities with China commenced in 1937 and Japan occupied eastern China by early 1938, Chinese radio stations that fell under Japanese control began using Domei reports for their news programs. As the American-owned and anti-Japanese *China Weekly Review* put it in 1939, "[I]t was evident to the Japanese militarists, as it is to all dictatorial forces, that radio is one of the most potent forms of propaganda. So long as it was beyond their control, it was an everlasting menace to their designs." W6XBE-KGEI posed one such menace.²⁶

Like Domei, JZI and JZJ enjoyed close connections to the Imperial Army. The Army used the crisis of Great Depression in the 1930s to promote its expansionist designs in East Asia as the solution to Japan's economic problems. In the process, the Army extended its influence throughout multiple government ministries and the mass media. Through the manipulation of cabinet appointments and the creation of several Army-dominated interagency cabinet-level policymaking bodies, military influence quickly extended over Japan's radio broadcasting monopoly Nihon Hoso Kyokai (NHK) and the Communications Ministry that nominally controlled it. Publicly, NHK professed its cosmopolitan-sounding commitment to promoting "good knowledge and understanding among peoples of the globe." In practice, Japanese broadcasting became a strong voice of support for the Army's expansionist foreign policy in East Asia. Army-supported Domei provided NHK with its news reports. The East Asian Broadcast Council, created in 1939 under Army prodding, ensured that international shortwave broadcasts also relied on Domei and reflected pro-expansionist views. Consequently, JZI and JZJ also became key media components of this overall expansionist web.²⁷ In the process, W6XBE-KGEI's American news broadcasts to East Asia became an obvious target for elimination.

The intentional jamming of W6XBE-KGEI's news broadcasts provoked a particularly strong response from American listeners. "Local Americans Ask Probe of Alleged West Coast Broadcast Jam By Japanese," shouted the *China Press* headline on the second page of the October 4, 1939 edition. The jamming efforts threatened to sever that long-sought media connection to their distant homeland that W6XBE-KGEI had only months earlier started providing; at the same time, the jamming also undermined timely access to presumably reliable and often necessary news in a wartime context. Moreover, many Americans manifested a corollary distrust toward other English-language news sources reaching East Asia. In 1939, with much of Asia and Europe either at war or on its precipice, government-controlled international broadcasts sought to cast their respective international activities in a favorable light. "Propaganda Replaces News as War Censors Go Into Action" trumpeted one headline in the *China Weekly Review* shortly after the 1939 outbreak of the European war. These practices contradicted a general American expectation of objectivity in news reporting. This expectation, not necessarily met in practice, had developed since the late nineteenth century when the political and economic transformations impacting the United States reduced the hold of political parties over the popular press in favor of advertising-based nonpartisan publications that targeted the

broadest popular audience. Americans redefined the significance of news and the technologies that spread it through their ability to convey "value-free," impartial, and disinterested information that was deemed necessary to understand the world, make sound decisions, and ultimately help a society advance.²⁸

Viola Smith, for instance, spoke to the need for objective American news as early as 1935 when she made her initial plea for Americans to build a new shortwave station on the US west coast. By early 1938, she was griping about the "[n]ationalistic propaganda" that plagued both Moscow's and Berlin's broadcasts, although Smith acknowledged that Germany promoted "some efforts at international goodwill." She was less forgiving of Rome's "very nationalistic" broadcasts, particularly the coverage of Italy's 1937 invasion of Ethiopia that only presented "Italy's side of the story." Only broadcasts from Britain and Australia, two countries that embraced comparable ideals about journalistic objectivity, were spared Smith's criticisms. Nationalistic propaganda in broadcasts from those countries was "very, very slight" (in England's case) and "unobtrusive" (in the Australian broadcasts). Japan, however, earned her harshest appraisal. "News definitely biased," the Trade Commissioner wrote in January 1938. "Accounts of events in China are many times flagrantly distorted."²⁹

Other Americans offered equally scathing condemnations of Japanese news. T.A. Bisson, a member of the Foreign Policy Association in the United States who traveled to China in the early stages of the Sino-Japanese conflict, made several references to Domei's self-serving manipulation of news. American reporters Hallet Abend, Randall Gould, John Powell, and James Young all commented on their low regard for Japanese reporting. "Not being an eyewitness to the scene of action," wrote journalist G.E. Miller, "I could only base my answers on the Japanese dispatches whose truthfulness called for more grains of salt than I had on hand at the moment." American journalist James Bertram was taken aback by the explicitly anti-Chinese character of official Japanese broadcasts. "Even the Children's Hour," he observed, "usually contained some moral story about the 'brave Japanese soldiers' and the 'treacherous Chinese.'" The missionary William Johnson wrote to his stateside wife a little more than a year into the war about his concerns that the Associated Press used information from Domei reports in its own dispatches about China. "[Y]ou may depend on it that Domei reports grossly exaggerated Chinese losses and many times over diminish their own," he warned. Absent that malfeasant Domei influence, Johnson was otherwise quite confident that "American news seemed very reliable."³⁰

W6XBE-KGEI could presumably counter Domei's manipulations. One story in the *China Weekly Review* praised the station's reliance on the Hearst International New Service, "which is independent from the standpoint of political control." The Japanese, however, rejected this subjective presumption of the superior and value-free nature of American news. American popular and political opinion had, in fact, moved decisively against Japanese expansion. This shift was reflected in the tone of American radio news. In the years leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, American radio news commentators tended to lump Japan with Germany and Italy as the "bad nations" of the world and advocate tougher US policies to counter Japanese aggression. From the Japanese vantage point, W6XBE-KGEI's news broadcasts carried into East Asia the ever-worsening anti-Japanese biases in Western reporting that had long concerned them.³¹

The simple solution was to jam the American station. Jamming was consistent with other systematic Japanese efforts to assert control over the flow of information in China. Censorship, seizure, and additional restrictions on newspapers, mail, and other sources of information exchange were part of that wider effort.³² After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese even briefly expanded an existing ban on the import of Hollywood films into Japan to include the occupied areas of China as well. Concerns that angry filmmakers would retaliate by producing and globally distributing influential films that cast Japanese in an even more villainous light led, in part, to a relaxation of the restrictions in 1938.³³ No such second thoughts entered into the calculations about radio. Well before W6XBE-KGEI arrived on the scene in 1939, the Japanese pursued systematic jamming of non-Japanese radio newscasts. In late 1937, William Johnson complained that "interference...is terrible" and that the Japanese were "blotting out [stations] other than Jap stations." Beginning in October of that year, the missionary noticed that "Japanese news broadcasts come in clearly, but other radio news is seriously interfered with." Johnson theorized that "the Japs were blowing horns, blowing whistles in several different keys as well as having someone shout into the receiver."³⁴

The same jamming techniques were subsequently applied to W6XBE-KGEI. Viola Smith, who felt protective over the station after all she did to secure its establishment, collected evidence of Japanese wrongdoing against W6XBE-KGEI. She organized a committee of American listeners, mostly radio broadcasters and journalists already holding low opinions of the Japanese. They monitored the broadcasts and gathered evidence of Japanese jamming. According to one account

Smith forwarded to Washington, a Japanese station brazenly interrupted the station's news broadcast by announcing its call letters and offering news items that were "entirely Japanese propaganda." Smith's own experience confirmed the story. She recounted one evening when the American news broadcast was cut off in mid-sentence by "a voice speaking in English (but with an accent such as to lead one to feel that it was Japanese speaking)." For twenty minutes thereafter, Smith grumbled, "[t]he English speaking voice calling itself JZJ, Tokyo, continued... to give news of Japanese activities in China, and some events in Tokyo, most of which were accredited to the Domei news agency." Considering the clarity of W6XBE-KGEI's programming for the entire day, Smith inferred that the Japanese station had clearly waited until the 8:30pm newscast to "deliberately... increase its power, for it comes in to such an extent as to blot out KGEI completely." To punctuate her accusations, she enclosed newspaper articles from Shanghai's papers prominently reporting the jamming, such as the story in the October 7, 1939 *China Weekly Review* headlined, "Japanese Stations Jam American News Broadcasts."³⁵

Smith was not the only one registering strong complaints. "These Jap squeals are general and deliberate," one Hong Kong listener charged. "They are low power I would say and intended primarily to prevent the reception in Japan of foreign news." This writer also alluded to the effect of tightening German-Japanese ties on the airwaves: "[The squeals] are on all the English broadcasts except Berlin." Hong Kong-based missionary W.M. Burnside also saw evidence of a Fascist strategy. "I think some one was trying to cut off the news," he surmised, "as the interference started when something was said re[garding] the Japs, Berlin, and Italy." Even a listener from distant British North Borneo caught on to the pattern. He complained of intentional interference from the Japanese and accidental interference from Australia. "The reason I say the Japanese interference is intentional," the listener explained, "is that they only cut in on the news broadcast."³⁶

The flood of written complaints underscores how seriously radio listeners considered the jamming of news broadcasts. American diplomats beyond Viola Smith worked to get Washington to intervene. "[T]he Japanese intend to continue interference with the only American station which can be generally received in the Far East," Frank Lockhart, the Counselor of the American Embassy in Beijing, complained about the disruption to W6XBE-KGEI in late 1939. Erle Dickover, the American Consul in Batavia, protested the situation to both his superiors in Washington and directly to General Electric



Figure 6.2 Frank Lockhart, 1939 (Harris and Ewing Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

about the shortwave station's problems. "Local residents are," he noted, "...more or less dependent on KGEI and other American stations for accurate and impartial news and are greatly disappointed that the service recently is subject to so much interference." For its

part, General Electric also forwarded to Washington the listener complaints it received.³⁷

Washington ultimately chose to steer clear of the W6XBE–KGEI radio controversy. Between late 1939 and early 1941, US policymakers focused on events in Europe, deemed more critical to American strategic and economic interests than the problems in East Asia. To be sure, American policymakers never advocated turning a blind eye to Japan's depredations in China and wider East Asia. However, with the US directing its attention and resources toward helping England defeat Germany, President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull preferred to avoid provoking an unnecessary and distracting diplomatic controversy in East Asia if at all possible.³⁸ For that reason, the State Department asked W6XBE–KGEI to move its frequency to escape Japanese interference. The FCC strenuously objected to that recommendation, preferring instead that W6XBE–KGEI increase its power in an effort to drown out the offending Japanese stations. The State Department, however, rejected that provocative suggestion. Lacking Washington's support against Japan, W6XBE–KGEI switched its frequency assignment. In early 1941, Viola Smith reported that although reception of W6XBE–KGEI did indeed improve after the switch, interference remained a problem.³⁹

How effective was the Japanese jamming of W6XBE–KGEI? It only appeared to make American listeners more determined to overcome that interference. Rather than counter perceived American biases against Japan, jamming only served to flesh them out. Jamming and broadcasting over American news was something linked to the dishonesty and trickery one associated with "Japs," as more than one writer noted. While some of those same writers also associated Germany and Italy with the jamming, they never referred to the peoples of those countries with any comparably derogative epithets that were at hand. If anything, pejorative views of the Japanese were only strengthened once it became clear that Japan was behind the jamming. Indeed, both the Americans and Japanese engaged W6XBE–KGEI and its newscasts from the vantage point of their existing beliefs and values.⁴⁰ To the Americans, W6XBE–KGEI captured the ideal of objective American journalism, and the Japanese efforts to mute the station only highlighted Japanese deficiencies. To the Japanese, however, W6XBE–KGEI's newscasts confirmed their deeply held suspicions of an American bias against Japan. Neither side was influenced by W6XBE–KGEI's news as much as they were mobilized by the station to strengthen and defend their existing preconceptions. Not surprisingly, the wartime experience of admittedly anti-Japanese XMHA and its premier newscaster Carroll Alcott followed a similar pattern.

Spreading the jam in Shanghai: Carroll Alcott and XMHA

California-based W6XBE–KGEI was only a minor irritant to the Japanese compared to Shanghai's XMHA. XMHA's news reports almost always reflected poorly on Japan, and its audience was as wide-spread as its signal was strong. Even before Carroll Alcott joined the XHMA's on-air talent, the station left no doubt that its sympathies were with the Chinese forces desperately facing the Japanese advance in Shanghai. On August 28, 1937, XMHA gave broadcast time to the American-educated wife of Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek, Meiling Song. Reflecting on "Madame Chiang's" ability to mobilize support and substantive aid for China within the United States, Chiang Kai-shek reportedly bragged to *Life* magazine correspondent Clare Boothe that his wife was the equivalent of ten army divisions.⁴¹ On XMHA, she spoke of the "horrors confronting the Chinese people" and "the monstrous destruction of life" occurring because of the "the Japanese onslaught." "What Japan is doing," Song railed, "is against the law of both God and nature." The Associated Press reprinted Song's compelling denunciation of Japan over XMHA, which was distributed to newspapers throughout the United States.⁴²

XMHA's ties to the Henningsen Produce Company also underscored its antipathy toward Japan. As president of Henningsen, XMHA owner U.S. Harkson had aggressively challenged Japanese efforts to expand their share of the China market at the expense of the Henningsen company and broader American economic interests. "Mr. Harkson and his associates have been extremely energetic in resisting Japanese encroachments upon American trade in the Yangtze Valley area," wrote Maxwell Hamilton of the State Department's Far Eastern Affairs Division. To Harkson, XMHA offered yet another front in this battle against Japan. The decision to hire journalist Carroll Alcott, already well-known in China for his print stories exposing Japanese hypocrisy and corruption, fit with that agenda. In 1938, the American reporter replaced Acheson Lucey, an American journalist with the US-owned *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* who had delivered XMHA's newscasts since the outbreak of the war. Jack Horton, an acquaintance of Alcott's who led RCA-Victor's record manufacturing factory in Shanghai pushed XMHA to hire Alcott. In making the pitch to station manager E.L. Healy, Horton identified Alcott's hostility to Japan as the main reason to hire the reporter. "[W]ith the Japs giving us the work with their 'Asia for Asiatics' slogans and propaganda, Americans in China need some counteraction," Horton claimed, according to Alcott's recollection.⁴³

That Alcott was even alive in mid-1938 to accept the job was something of a miracle. When the Sino-Japanese War spread into Shanghai during the early morning hours of August 13, 1937, Chinese and Japanese soldiers fighting from the rooftops sprayed his apartment with bullets. After spending the night on his kitchen floor, the next day Alcott escaped his apartment through a back alley entrance and headed to Nanjing Road in the International Settlement where he presumed it was safer. Like the unsuspecting Frank Rawlinson, Alcott happened to reach Nanjing Road when the wayward Chinese pilot inadvertently dropped bombs on that refugee-swelled street. Alcott recounted being thrown out of the rickshaw in which he was traveling and some twenty-feet into the air, before landing hard on the pavement. Coming to his senses not far from where the mortally wounded Rawlinson lay, Alcott recalled seeing "a bloody tangle of bodies that had been blown to bits." "Even after five years, I still have nightmares resulting from what I saw on Nanking Road and Avenue Edward VII," he wrote in 1943. "I sometimes wake from my sleep in cold sweat with the moans of hundreds of dying Chinese men and women ringing in my head."⁴⁴

Later on that traumatic August day, Japanese soldiers detained Alcott. Accused of spying, the well-known anti-Japanese journalist was eventually released after three hours. No charges were pressed. A small Japanese contingent escorted him home, but stopped one block short of his apartment. With Chinese and Japanese snipers exchanging fire from the surrounding rooftops, Alcott's escorts pointed their guns at him and insisted he walk the last block alone. As Alcott tells it, he made it to his apartment doorway after slowly creeping along the side of the building. As he walked through the door, four bullets whistled past his head into the building. Alcott suspected they actually came from his Japanese "escort," no doubt, he alleged, frustrated the disagreeable reporter made it to his apartment without so much as a scratch.⁴⁵

It should be noted, however, that several of Alcott's contemporaries felt the radio newscaster – whom they saw as vain and arrogant – was prone to exaggerating the threats against him.⁴⁶ In that light, perhaps this is one story that especially deserves to be read with a jaundiced eye. His survival, Alcott would have you believe as he tells it in his memoirs, depended on two strokes of luck: first, that in creeping along the side of his building, he was only in the line of sight of anonymous Chinese snipers, who somehow recognized him as a friend from the rooftops and intentionally withheld their fire until he could reach safety; and second, that even though the Japanese who had him in custody allegedly wanted him dead, the only way they could think to accomplish

that goal was to shoot at him at the point where he was farthest from their grasp. Ultimately, we can never know whether this incident happened precisely the way Alcott tells it, if it is an unconscious exaggeration that reflects Alcott's genuine belief of how he escaped death at the hands of the Japanese that day, or if he did embellish the story for his memoir. Still, the decision to convey this story as he did, regardless of its verity, reflects how the eruption of the Sino-Japanese War compounded his indubitable propensity to hate Japan.

To be sure, Alcott's hatred of Japan was not the only reason to accept the job offer from XMHA. Alcott was bored and "disgusted" with his work at the *China Press*. He envied the journalists who fled west with the Nationalists and reported on the war from the wartime capital in Chongqing. Radio newscasting might just shake him out of his funk, he rationalized, and perhaps even make him a star. And all he had to do was stay true to his actual feelings about Japan. "This was an opportunity to be of service where service was needed," Alcott remarked. "I had exposed their vice rings, the inner workings of their opium and heroin monopolies, and their white slave rackets," he bragged of his earlier *China Press* investigations into Japanese machinations. Scheduled for three broadcasts a day, Alcott became the voice of XMHA news. "I was not just a nuisance," he proudly proclaimed. "I was an anti-Japanese institution."⁴⁷

Alcott's opinions about the Japanese were infused with racially charged stereotypes typical for the era. Alcott's 1943 memoir recounts visits from "Ken Suzuki," who sought to either bring Alcott's broadcasts in line with Japanese policy or frighten him off the airwaves altogether. Suzuki, who Alcott also referenced frequently on XMHA, may have been based on an actual Japanese agent that dogged Alcott. However, the Suzuki that Alcott presented to his readers (and to his radio audience before that) was primarily a fictional character Alcott created to convey his view of the deceitful and bullying Japanese. This caricature spoke to nearly every conceivable anti-Japanese stereotype prevalent among Americans at the time. "Mr. Suzuki is not one individual," he wrote. "There are thousands of him – no, many thousands." Suzuki represented an amalgamation of the worst of Hitler's henchmen. "Mr. Suzuki," Alcott concluded, "is Goebbels, Rosenberg, and Himmler rolled into one, a tough customer." Suzuki also captured Alcott's negative presumptions of a homogeneous Japanese people. Ten thousand "little" Goebbels, Rosenbergs, and Himmlers ran about Japan, he claimed. Similar to a US wartime propaganda film that described the Japanese people as "photographic prints of the same negative," Alcott's Suzuki presented an omnipresent global threat to Americans. "Ken Suzuki"

was everywhere: The Japanese tourists who traveled the globe with "camera dangling from straps around his neck and with a notebook and pencil in his pocket ... [taking] pictures of everything in sight;" fishermen trolling the East Indies recording strategic information for the Japanese navy; and in the Shanghai photography shop that no doubt served as a front for a Japanese intelligence operation. No wonder the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor succeeded, Alcott mused. Suzuki masked his clever, ruthless, scheming, and cunning personality under a smiling face and pleasant demeanor. "He was a versatile fellow, and always polite," Alcott concluded. "He could stick a knife in your back and beg your pardon at the same time." Efforts to censor Alcott or keep him off the airwaves altogether, which included bombing XMHA days before his first broadcast, further reinforced Alcott's antipathies. He would not just be any old newscaster. He was determined to use his perch to expose the Japanese for what they were. "My own war with Japan," he trumpeted, "was underway."⁴⁸

Alcott's polemical views point to some of the many complexities surrounding the American ideal of journalistic objectivity. For one thing, objectivity is not equivalent to neutrality. To be sure, objective journalism demands that all relevant sides of a story are addressed, regardless of the journalist's personal opinion. However, once a story is explored from multiple perspectives, the "truth" might, in fact, not be neutral but point to substantive and even damning conclusions affixing clear culpability, blame, and responsibility to a particular party.⁴⁹ In Alcott's view, his reporting on Japan for the *China Press* met this standard. Alcott's exposure of Japanese involvement in illicit narcotics trafficking in China, for example, was factually based. That conclusion, Alcott insisted, did not convey a skewed, unjustified pro-Chinese perspective. It was the truth. "[O]n the *China Press* we presented both sides of the story," he explained. After all the facts were considered, Alcott claimed, "the Chinese side far outweighed the Japanese side." The American Consulate General, who determined Alcott's reporting on the subject presented "a fairly accurate picture," clearly concurred with that assessment.⁵⁰

From the Japanese vantage point, Alcott's journalism fell short of any standard of objectivity because he pursued a personal vendetta against Japan. The flaws and excesses of their own China policies notwithstanding, the Japanese had a point in this instance. Although there is no evidence that Alcott was guilty of the blatant manipulations Domei engaged in, he did indeed make a special effort focus his ire on Japan. Alcott's harsh assessment of Japanese involvement in the narcotics trade,

for example, was girded not by an overall concern for the truth, but by a guiding determination to slam Japan. Strictly speaking, Alcott's reporting on the narcotics trade offered a fair assessment of the extent of Japanese involvement; however, he absolutely whitewashed the degree to which Chiang's Nationalists promoted the trade in competition with Japan prior to the outbreak of war. Instead, he accepted at face value the Nationalist claims that Chinese efforts to regulate the trade prior to the war were designed to achieve gradual suppression; he refused to acknowledge the obvious truth that Nanjing maintained involvement in the trade and established questionable relationships with traffickers in order to secure lucrative revenue for the financially troubled and politically divided regime. That Alcott's reporting received a favorable review from the Consulate further underscored the tendency, increasingly evident among US diplomats and in the wider American media in China on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War, to hold Japan to a more rigorous standard of accountability than China with regard to drug trafficking. Alcott continued this practice after moving to radio. While Fascist Italians, anti-Soviet "White Russians" and pro-Nazi Germans were also targeted by Alcott's high-octane commentary, it was the Japanese that admittedly received the bulk of his condemnations time and time again. XMHA had hired Alcott for just this purpose. "Suzuki was right" to be worried, Alcott confirmed. "I would do the Japanese no good, and he knew it."⁵¹

The proof came quickly. Within three days of beginning his newscasts, a Chinese resister and a Chinese collaborator were assassinated in separate incidents. Alcott's reporting on the resister's death was subdued, but he turned gleeful when announcing the same fate met by the collaborator. Alcott consistently ridiculed the Japanese claim to be establishing a "New Order" in East Asia by satirizing it as Japan's "New Odor." When Japanese officials privately approached him with an inquiry about what might be done to get him to "say something nice" about the Imperial Army, Alcott used his program to share the request with his listeners and sarcastically suggest that the military might begin by terminating its practices of looting, kidnapping, and killing innocents. Alcott teamed his Ken Suzuki antagonist with another caricature he called Mr. Wanatabe, and made them recurring characters on his radio program. He used them, according to a July 1940 *Time* magazine article, "to serve as the personification of Rising Sun arrogance." During the 1940 Shanghai city elections, Alcott took to the airwaves to campaign for the defeat of the Japanese candidates; their victory would give the Japanese a majority vote in the Shanghai Municipal Council.

The Japanese candidates ultimately lost a very close election. "I could not keep out of the election battle," he recalled. "[A]s a decent citizen of the International Settlement, I had no alternative."⁵²

In light of these antics, the Japanese found it difficult to take claims about the objectivity of American journalism at face value. By 1938, American charges that Japanese journalism lacked credibility and objectivity rang hollow considering that the most popular American radio newscaster in China made attacking the Japanese the centerpiece of his on-air identity. And yet, for all Alcott's vitriol, the factual accuracy of his broadcasts did exceed anything that Domei covered. The patterns of Japanese excesses that Alcott railed against have since been convincingly documented in the historical record. Indeed, the overall toll of Japan's war against China turned out to be far worse than anything Alcott imagined. Between 1931 and 1941, seven million – mostly civilian – Chinese died as a result of war-related causes, which is nearly double the number of Japanese who died during the entire 1931–45 period.⁵³ Even so, Alcott's broadcasts were undoubtedly as politically motivated to undermine Japanese objectives as Domei reports were to advance them. Political motivations not in question, Alcott's broadcasts confirmed every existing Japanese suspicion about a Western news bias directed against Japan. He had to be stifled.

Within days of going on the air, listeners in cities north and south of Shanghai found that Alcott's newscasts were jammed. At first, this jamming focused on the station's reception in distant cities over the short-wave frequencies. The American Consul General in Tianjin conveyed his suspicions to Washington that local Japanese interfered with the reception of XMHA's news broadcasts in the city. He was correct. "The Japanese authorities admitted responsibility for the interference," wrote Frank Lockhart, now serving as the American Consul General stationed in Shanghai and who had compiled many of the complaints. Japanese ships anchored off the shores of such cities as Beijing, Tienjin, Yantai, Shantou, and Qingdao began jamming the broadcasts. Confirming missionary William Johnson's earlier suspicions, Japanese sailors did, in fact, beat gongs, ring bells, blow horns, and operate buzzers in front of the ships' microphones tuned to XMHA's frequency. Their intention, Lockhart informed Washington, was "to compel the American station to reduce its power so that it would not be heard outside of Shanghai and submit to other measures of control."⁵⁴

The Japanese in Shanghai did not at first bother with XMHA's reception within Shanghai city limits. Responsibility for regulating radio in Japanese-controlled Shanghai and monitoring it in the foreign

settlements fell under the purview of the "Broadcast Radio Supervisory Office," established in 1938 and led by Major Asano Kazuwo. Asano and this "Radio Control Board," as the International Settlement authorities called it, initially dismissed Alcott's local significance. They presumed that Alcott reported news already known to his local American listeners and did so with an anti-Japanese hostility largely shared by that audience. However, that complacency changed when Alcott began campaigning against the Japanese candidates running in the 1940 municipal elections. In response, the Radio Control Board jammed XMHA locally. Station manager E.L. Healy tracked the source of the interference to a specific room in a Japanese-occupied hotel. In his customary sarcastic fashion, Alcott then embarrassed the Japanese by broadcasting the specific room number of the hotel and encouraging his listeners to visit it. XMHA minimized the effect of the jamming by slightly adjusting its frequency to avoid the disruption. Efforts to jam Alcott's broadcasts within Shanghai persisted after the elections. In December 1940, the Shanghai Municipal Police confirmed Healy's findings and confronted the Japanese Radio Control Board with the accusation of intentional jamming, which the Japanese officials willingly confirmed.⁵⁵ The whole fiasco made the Japanese efforts to silence Alcott look amateurish and incompetent.

Alcott had already demonstrated that he was not easily intimidated well before he went to work for XMHA. Nothing changed in that regard. Throughout his three years on the air in Shanghai, he endured an array of abduction, mugging, and assassination attempts. Their cumulative effect was to increase Alcott's hostility toward the Japanese and make the bull-headed broadcaster even more determined to flout their wishes. At one point, the Russians even threatened to kill him for comparing them to the Japanese; to be sure, it was an offensive comparison to both groups in light of their tension-ridden history. Alcott rejected a police request that he tone down his act. "I will not submit to any intimidation," he insisted. Given Alcott's willingness to also lambaste Germans, Italians, Russians, and anyone else who rubbed him the wrong way, sometimes it was difficult to ascertain who precisely wished him dead at any given moment. E.L. Healy answered the phone at XMHA one March evening in 1941 only to hear an anonymous caller blurt out "I want to tell you that we are going to shoot you and also Mr. Alcott." Healy detected a foreign accent but praised the caller's generally "good English" in his report to the police. Ultimately, Healy could not pinpoint a precise nationality – and the long list of persons of other nationalities that might want Alcott dead by 1941 made it difficult to wager a guess.⁵⁶

In that instance, it was probably not the Japanese. Major Asano and the other officials of the Japanese Radio Control Board absolutely wanted Alcott to know when they were doing the threatening. How else could they impress upon him to curtail his anti-Japanese broadcasts? This strategy consistently backfired, sometimes in unexpected ways. In yet another bizarre car chase incident, three Japanese embassy employees tried to run Alcott's car off the road, but only side-swiped it before getting stuck in traffic a few cars away. The burly and hot-tempered Alcott responded by leaping out of his own vehicle, charging his attackers' car with his gun drawn, dragging one of the occupants out of that automobile while the others cowered on the floor of their car. In retrospect, Alcott – who admitted he created a “ridiculous” scene – was lucky none of the occupants were armed themselves. Otherwise, they likely would have shot him dead with some justification and plenty of witnesses to describe how a half-crazed 220 pound American charged their car with his loaded gun pointed at them. Instead, a crowd of Chinese pedestrians gathered around Alcott and cheered. They thought he was forcing the Japanese officials to kowtow to him in public. As these types of incidents multiplied, a Japanese reporter for Domei confided in Alcott that the intention had never been to kill him, but rather to teach him a lesson. Apparently, his intimidators were poor teachers and Alcott an even worse student, since the broadcaster relished sharing these repeated run-ins with his audience for the sole purpose of further embarrassing the Japanese and emphasizing their ineffectiveness at silencing him. US-based publications such as *Time* and the *New York Times* even picked up on these colorful stories. In a July 1940 article on Alcott's travails, *Time* reported that “Jap terrorists tried to drag him out of a rickshaw in the American Defense Zone of the International Settlement.”⁵⁷

Alcott gained further renown as other local newspapers publicized his follies with the Japanese. Both English and Chinese language newspapers in China carried stories of the “deliberate interference by Japanese elements” against XMHA. The *China Press*, *North China Daily News*, *Shanghai Times*, and others all ran prominent stories with bold headlines about XMHA's jamming travails. One letter to the editor published in the December 20, 1940 edition of the British *North China Daily News* advocated all stations targeted by Japan work together by “sharing” each other's frequencies to skirt the jamming. “Many have come to regard Mr. Alcott as the most popular exponent of Democracy in Shanghai and therefore worthy of all possible support to combat Axis propaganda and falsehoods belched forth from some local stations,” another supportive listener wrote in the next day's paper. “To my knowledge, his

voice is eagerly looked forward to all over China and elsewhere in the Far East," this supporter concluded before offering to donate money to help XMHA overcome its problems. The Chinese language paper *Zheng Yan Bao* identified XMHA as a "supporter of justice" which was the very reason that "it is hated by Japan." XMHA's troubles was indicative, the paper reported, of the Japan's "deliberate interference [with] the legitimate rights and interests of third nations." Another Chinese language paper, the *Chinese-American Daily News*, assessed the consequences of Japanese jamming even more bluntly. "Apart from creating a bad impression upon foreigners," this article noted, "the Japanese can derive no benefit by this interference with broadcasts."⁵⁸

This notoriety built Alcott a large and loyal following. Estimates of his audience in China alone ranged from a quarter to a half million listeners. With XMHA's shortwave signal reaching well beyond China, untold additional numbers outside of China listened as well. "He is by far," the *China Weekly Review* noted in June 1939, "the most popular among the foreign population of Shanghai." There was of course one obvious exception. "[W]hat makes him popular among the foreigners and Chinese makes him bitterly unpopular with the Japanese Control Board and its Nipponese army supporters," the periodical observed. Indeed, as the interference on Alcott's broadcasts increased, the entire student body of Shanghai's "American School" presented a petition to the Japanese ambassador insisting the jamming cease. It did not.⁵⁹

Individual recollections confirm his popularity. For Velva Brown, Carroll Alcott joined Norman Page as her two favorite newscasters. William Johnson listened in Nanchang. Elleroy and Maybelle Smith listened, and even tuned into Alcott on the ship bringing them back to Shanghai from their US furlough in January 1940. James Halselma, an American who traveled to Beijing in 1940 as part of his involvement with the internationalist Japan-American Student Conference observed that each day foreigners "eagerly awaited... [Alcott's] 15 minute noon and evening news broadcasts, delivered in a dry, toneless voice but full of cracks against the Japanese and their collaborators and news about their activities." Halselma particularly liked Alcott's sarcastic references to Japan's "New Odor" in Asia, especially when he managed to insert them into commercial promotions for products such as Jello and Ovaltine. The "New Odor" jibes also tickled Shanghai resident Rena Krasno. She also recalled Alcott's "mellow voice" and "pleasant tones" that made listening to him such an enjoyable experience. Krasno even remembered Alcott's tongue-in-cheek suggestions about what the Japanese military might do to secure a nice word from him. Somewhat

surprisingly, she thought, he never lost his sponsorships from such brands as Maxwell House and Bakerite Bread, despite the rising Japanese pressure. Why would he? Alcott had fashioned himself into the most listened to American broadcaster in China.⁶⁰

Alcott's popularity, however, had its limits when it came to American diplomats. On his own initiative, American Consul in Shanghai Richard Butrick, who enjoyed taunting his Japanese counterpart in the city by stressing the ineffectiveness of Japanese jamming, tried to secure Washington's support. He asked the State Department to "consider instructing the Embassy at Tokyo to take the case up with the Japanese government." His superior, Maxwell Hamilton in the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs, responded by saying that Washington viewed Alcott's XMHA broadcasts as tantamount to "the dissemination of partisan propaganda from the International Settlement." Such broadcasts, Hamilton complained, tended to "aggravate the situation" and threatened the "integrity of the International Settlement in Shanghai."⁶¹

The Shanghai Municipal Council agreed. At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, the SMC had made a point of trying to suppress anti-Japanese broadcasting stations based in the Settlement. If the Settlement became too much of a haven for destructive anti-Japanese elements, the Imperial Army left little doubt that it would bypass the Shanghai Municipal Council and deal with the problem itself. The SMC did not want to see their own authority subverted by a unilateral Japanese move into their jurisdiction, nor did they want to give the Japanese any legal authority to act independently within Settlement borders. That meant using the SMC's existing authority to address the problem. Toward that end, the SMC and its police force cooperated with the Japanese Radio Control Board to identify and shut down all Chinese stations broadcasting anti-Japanese propaganda. By using its own police, the SMC hoped to dissuade the Japanese military from trespassing on its jurisdiction. By 1939, not a single Chinese station that broadcast anything anti-Japanese remained on the air in Shanghai.⁶²

XMHA, however, was American-owned. As such, it claimed extraterritorial rights, which put it under the purview of applicable American laws. Consequently, the SMC had no legal means to move against it. The Shanghai Municipal Police could do little more than chastise XMHA for broadcasts deemed "prejudicial to law and order and undesirable in the International Settlement." E.L. Healy rejected the SMP's stance since "there is no legal restraint on free speech by Americans." When the SMP approached Carroll Alcott directly with its complaints, he was

described unsurprisingly – and perhaps understatedly – as “not very conciliatory.” With an unrepentant Alcott still facing death threats, the SMP was forced to provide him with special police protection despite their abhorrence of his broadcasts. Leaving Alcott unprotected might compel the Japanese to act independently of the police to silence Alcott once and for all, which the SMP interpreted as an even more intolerable attack on their responsibility to maintain law and order in the Settlement.⁶³

In the end, XMHA and Alcott’s broadcasts withstood the pressure being applied by the US government, the Shanghai Municipal Council, and the Japanese government. All three proved powerless at reining in the inflammatory programming. At a time when efforts to prevent a disruption in US-Japanese relations took precedence, Washington was unhappy with the provocative nature of the programming. However, State Department officials would not take any formal action against its own law-abiding citizens. Indeed, the domestic political ramifications of Washington trying to stifle the well-known Alcott at a time when American anti-Japanese sentiments were intensifying would no doubt be unpalatable. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Municipal Council was also displeased with Alcott’s incendiary attacks on the Japanese. Those ill-timed attacks came just as the SMC was trying to hold off Japanese demands that Japan be allowed to exercise authority in the Settlement to suppress anti-Japanese broadcasts. Rather than cede authority to the Japanese, the SMC moved against the Chinese broadcasters that trafficked in anti-Japanese programming. The SMC could not, however, move against Alcott, who was protected by his extraterritorial rights. The SMC was also not willing to allow the Japanese to move unilaterally against Alcott and XMHA; for the SMC to look the other way while Japan took action against the offensive broadcasts risked the diminution of very authority within the Settlement that the SMC was desperately hoping to preserve.

The Japanese forces in China, possessing the largest grievance against XMHA and Carroll Alcott, ultimately let the situation stand. They refused to take any more aggressive actions beyond jamming and amateurish efforts at physical intimidation. The Japanese had the preponderance of force in Shanghai to bully past these legal niceties, but it was not worth it under the circumstances. In stifling the disagreeable Chinese radio stations, the SMC proved willing to do the Japanese bidding. The XMHA situation notwithstanding, the Council had, in fact, been largely effective in that task. The SMC’s pliable attitude strongly discouraged Japan from making any bolder

moves at this point. One could not be sure what international complications might follow a more aggressive effort to undermine the SMC's internationally recognized authority in the Settlement. Certainly, Washington could not be expected to remain removed from the situation if Alcott was imprisoned or murdered, or if the American-owned XMHA was occupied or destroyed. That would demand Washington, however reluctant, step into the fray. In view of these circumstances, the best option, ineffective though it was, remained the waging of a low-level fight against Alcott and XMHA that emphasized jamming and intimidation.

As with W6XBE-KGEI, efforts to block out XMHA only made the news-thirsty audience hungry for more. It did not help that within Shanghai the technical shortcomings of Japanese jamming methods left the broadcasts perfectly clear in large parts of the city. Listeners wanted to know what the colorful Carroll Alcott had to say next and knew they could hear it. "Some, like me," Rena Krasno recalled, "took to keeping paper and pencil in hand when listening to Alcott so as to jot down his daring words verbatim." Those words became popular topics of conversation in Krasno's social circle.⁶⁴ A similar dynamic took hold in other cities as well. In Beijing, for example, James Halsema specifically remembered listening to Alcott over the interference, and sensing the widespread anticipation around him of what Alcott might say next that the Japanese did not want anyone to hear.⁶⁵ To listeners infuriated over the Japanese efforts to block the reception of the volatile broadcaster, the picture Alcott painted of a malevolent Japanese "Other" was quite convincing. To these listeners, such deliberate interference only confirmed the very image of Japan that the jamming was supposed to combat.

Carroll Alcott was lucky. He left China in October 1941 for what was supposed to be a short trip to the United States. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, they also occupied Shanghai's International Settlement. Had Alcott been in Shanghai on that date, he no doubt would have been imprisoned and faced the treatment accorded his friend and print journalist colleague, John Powell, the renowned and equally anti-Japanese editor of the *China Weekly Review*. Powell had chaired the listening committee that Viola Smith formed to find evidence of Japanese jamming against W6XBE-KGEI. His *Review* was so avidly anti-Japanese that the Chinese Nationalists subsidized it with bulk subscription purchases. Powell barely survived his brutal imprisonment. He lost all of his toes when they froze and became gangrenous as a result of the physical mistreatment he experienced after less than a year in Japanese custody.⁶⁶

Alcott, however, found himself in Washington meeting with the FCC in November 1941, discussing how W6XBE–KGEI might adapt some XMHA's approaches to reporting the news. That such a meeting was held highlights the FCC's opposition to the State Department's initial desire to soft-pedal W6XBE–KGEI's conflict with Japan (although by November 1941 the State Department itself had become resigned to the near inevitability of war against Japan, clearing the way for W6XBE–KGEI to be utilized in support of the American war effort). Denied the opportunity to return to China after December 1941, Alcott soon joined Cincinnati's WLW, a pioneering station in the history of American broadcasting. To be sure, his stay at WLW was brief – he was fired a little over a year into his new gig after provoking a confrontation with a colleague at the station. First, he used his new program to disparage the quality of the commentary offered by Gregor Athalwin Ziemer, the German-American host of the show that followed Alcott's. Ziemer heatedly confronted Alcott in the hall after being insulted on the air. Alcott responded by calling him a Nazi. When Ziemer retaliated by shouting out an insult of his own, Alcott cold-cocked his rival right there in the WLW studios. That effectively ended the former XMHA broadcaster's brief tenure at the station. This career setback, however, proved temporary. After that fiasco, Alcott got his career back on track and became an award-winning CBS radio commentator based in Los Angeles, California until his death in 1965. Carroll Alcott never returned to China.⁶⁷

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Viola Smith, the American Trade Commissioner in Shanghai, declared that international radio was a vehicle to “promote friendship and understanding between American and Pacific neighbors.”⁶⁸ Japan's official NHK radio network echoed Smith with its claim that international radio fostered “good knowledge and understanding among peoples of the globe.”⁶⁹ If there ever was a region of the world that could benefit from radio's presumed blessings, East Asia in the late 1930s and early 1940s was it. Amidst the Sino-Japanese War, both Americans and Japanese exhibited a tremendous interest in the radio news that crossed international borders and reached international audiences. And yet, as that war strained US-Japanese relations, international radio news could not come close to achieving those lofty goals of promoting peace and friendship in East Asia. If anything, its effect was the opposite.

On one level, the reason is fairly straightforward. Technology is inextricably attached to the wider context in which people encounter and use it. The context that surrounded radio news during the Sino-Japanese War was one of increasing US-Japanese animosity on both the governmental and individual levels. Not surprisingly, radio news manifested this animosity in the programs, people, and policies that surrounded it. The frequency with which observers have claimed that radio could overcome such animosities and propel greater international unity flies in the face of this pattern. Whether it was Viola Smith or any of the countless Americans that have come before, during, or after her, this type of technological determinism has long maintained a firm grip over how so many Americans envision technology's potential to dramatically impact society. Its endurance, despite persistent evidence to the contrary, is testament to the strength of this determinism.

A more valuable starting point to assess the relationship between technology and society is to focus on the perspectives of and the choices made by its users. What are various users asking of a particular technology and how are their choices informed by the broader context in which those users live? Viola Smith may have articulated utopian-like views of radio's power to unify peoples, but in practice she primarily asked American radio to speak strictly to Americans. Stations such as XMHA and W6XBE-KGEI answered that call. In 1938, XMHA's management chose Carroll Alcott to be the station's primary newscaster especially because of his anti-Japanese reputation. In living up to this expectation, Alcott articulated an array of American views and stereotypes about the Japanese that were pervasive among many Americans at the time. He built a devoted audience among those multitudes of like-minded American listeners.

The Japanese also made choices with regard to radio news. Through XMHA and W6XBE-KGEI, men like Radio Control Board chief Asano Kazuwo encountered this reporting in an environment where Japan was trying to extend its influence and control. The Japanese had long charged, with some validity, that American journalism cultivated among its audience historically grounded prejudices against Japan. From that perspective, it was a logical choice to try and restrict the spread of this disagreeable radio news. So the Japanese responded by choosing to use radio technology to serve their own purposes: they jammed and then broadcast over American transmissions. They also chose to use other technologies such as their guns, bombs, and automobiles to intimidate

the most antagonistic broadcaster of all, Carroll Alcott. These choices contributed to the inflammation, not mitigation, of a US-Japanese divide.

And yet, for all the antagonism that ultimately surrounded American radio news in wartime China, this particular Japanese-American controversy never became a contested issue in the high level diplomacy of Tokyo and Washington on the eve of the Pacific War. American and Japanese officials made choices to ensure that radio's impact on top-level diplomatic interactions remained minimal. Both countries' diplomats confronted other issues driving the two countries toward war and could not be distracted by broadcasting. Japan never pushed its radio policies beyond nuisance interference and the physical intimidation of, but never actually harming, Carroll Alcott. Washington never vigorously defended the legal rights of W6XBE-KGEI or XMHA, and even professed its own displeasure with the content of Alcott's broadcasts. For all the hype about the good or bad that radio could do for international relations that followed broadcasting since its emergence, neither XMHA nor W6XBE-KGEI had a discernable impact at the highest level of US-Japanese relations. Choices were made to ensure that result.

In the end, the story of W6XBE-KGEI and XMHA in wartime China remains more about identity rather than diplomacy. Media technologies such as shortwave broadcasting enabled people separated by vast geographic distances to engage in direct exchanges of information in ways that might otherwise not be possible. W6XBE-KGEI and XMHA allowed American radio listeners in China to satiate their demand for news and entertainment in volatile wartime China. This was not, of course, a uniquely American phenomenon. The Japanese had stations such as XJOB, JZI, and JZJ. Other governments, such as Germany, Britain, and Italy, operated their own official stations closely linked to a sense of nation. For foreign nationals in China, the effort to satiate a particular sense of national identity entails not only a sense of who is included in that group, but also who is excluded. In this context, the process through which Americans engaged their stations in an otherwise multinational context demonstrates the potential cultural divisiveness of "national" media engaged by listeners in transnational contexts. An "us versus them" dynamic defined the contestations over American radio news in wartime China. W6XBE-KGEI and XMHA neither mitigated existing prejudices nor manufactured new ones. Instead, radio news and the battles that surrounded it provided a new vehicle to articulate, amplify, and intensify old ones. As the

example of American broadcasting in wartime China demonstrates, visions of a radio-created global utopia of peace and friendship inevitably fall short of the mark because those visions were disconnected from the actual context in which audiences engaged international broadcasting.

Conclusion

Interwar era professions that international radio in East Asia would forge a mutually prosperous and friendship-based international community consistently fell short of expectations. Time and again, the specific initiatives to develop an American presence in Chinese radiotelegraphy and broadcasting propelled considerable conflict in American-East Asian relations. The friendship- and trade-based international community envisioned by many interwar era radio enthusiasts remained out of reach. Instead, American radio initiatives in China from 1919 to 1941 consistently underscored and antagonized the incompatible visions that Americans, Chinese, and Japanese held for the future of East Asia.

Three recurrent patterns defined these various American radio projects and help explain the problems persistently encountered. First, culturally based assumptions about technology and communications persistently intruded on American radio initiatives in China. These assumptions included unrealistic beliefs about the power of technology and communications to affect some presumably positive change. In the process, they also betrayed an inclination to confuse particularly American ideas about technology and technological development with universal truths.

Second, those strong but misguided convictions in the positive powers of radio discouraged the thoughtful consideration of the context in which American radio would be situated. That shortcoming often encouraged suspect American decisions and actions on behalf of radio poorly suited to the situation at hand. From the vantage point of Chinese nationalists and state builders as well as Japanese expansionists and imperialists, American radio was not an obvious vehicle to bridge international divisions by enriching transnational economic and cultural exchanges. To them, American radio was a distinctly American project

that at different points challenged essential Chinese and Japanese interests in East Asia. Viewed from the Chinese and Japanese perspectives, American radio had to be contested in those instances.

Third and finally, Americans consistently underestimated the strength of those presumably weaker Chinese or Japanese opponents who contested American radio projects. That underestimation reflected the disconnect between American beliefs in the irresistible power of radio on the one hand, and the resolve of Chinese and Japanese opponents determined to shape radio to serve their own purposes on the other. Ultimately, Chinese and Japanese antagonists effectively resisted and undermined once promising American radio projects. In the end, not a single American radio project launched between 1919 and 1941 was able to achieve the lofty expectations that had first inspired it.

* * *

Culturally based assumptions about technology and communications invariably followed American radio initiatives into China. The belief that trans-Pacific radio communications promised to bridge cultural and international differences while encouraging mutually beneficial economic exchanges was perhaps the most pervasive. Those ideas, embraced by proponents of the 1920s Federal Telegraph and RCA projects, helped justify and promote those respective ventures. Similarly, the prospect of US-based shortwave broadcasting to China in the mid to late 1930s inspired comparable claims from its American promoters in China. These predictions captured the popular but deterministic views that conceived of communications technology as an inevitable and positive agent of change. Technology, in this view, operated independently of the surrounding societal context and remained impervious to any surrounding political, economic, social, or cultural forces.

Behind the idealism of this rhetoric stood more self-interested concerns. Federal and RCA's Sino-American radiotelegraphy links promised to finally open the Chinese market to more American trade and goods. Consequently, Federal and RCA stood to profit from their position as the operators of those lucrative connections. GE's US-based shortwave broadcasting to China would presumably increase trade by promoting broad American economic and cultural interests. Even proponents of the Christian broadcasting station XMHD – a broadcasting outlet arguably more parochial in its intentions due to the narrow religious focus of its efforts – captured this tension between ideals and self-interest. While the station was nominally established in 1934 to spread a universal

Christianity across China, the station's programs actually reflected a Christianity closely tethered to particularly American sensibilities.

This conflation of allegedly universal and mutually beneficial exchanges with apparently one-directional American influences into East Asia underscored a broader and more long-standing pattern in American foreign relations. As Emily Rosenberg argued in her groundbreaking 1982 study on US cultural and economic expansion abroad, many Americans understood their nation's history as not only unique and exceptional by the twentieth century, but as offering a universal model of development that should be fundamentally applicable anywhere in the developing world. In the process, notions of universal interests and particularly American interests had become inextricably intertwined. In this regard, efforts to expand American radio in China complimented other early twentieth-century efforts to expand the global reach of American communications through vehicles such as cable telegraphy, movies, aviation, and news. As with those other examples, the repeated use of universalistic rhetoric by radio project proponents to build support for various American radio initiatives, even if for consciously cynical and self-interested purposes at times, suggests those ideals enjoyed a wide currency among the intended American audience. Otherwise, there would be no point in deploying such rhetoric in the first place.¹

Whatever the guiding assumption, American radio interests and their supporters never took the prospect of resistance seriously. To be sure, the weak Chinese state of the 1920s and early 1930s did not appear well-positioned to oppose American radio. The Federal Telegraph Company thought it had gained an important toehold in the China market with its 1919 contract to establish the first direct Sino-American radiotelegraphy connections. The company then saw a succession of short-lived warlord regimes come and go from Beijing through the mid-1920s. Led by Rennie Schwerin, partnered with RCA, and supported by US diplomats, Federal Telegraph stonewalled repeated Chinese demands to renegotiate some unfavorable contract terms. Federal's presumption was that sooner or later a regime more favorable to the American viewpoint would soon occupy Beijing and push the project forward in its original form.

Unwavering in its intransigence, the Federal Telegraph Company saw its project interminably delayed by weak and unstable warlord regimes. These governments accomplished that delay by simply withholding the necessary signatures required for the requisite bond issue and land purchase. Even a short-lived warlord regime presumably favorable to

American interests that took power in 1922 could not risk going forward with the Federal Telegraph project unless the company agreed to modifications that removed some of the more exploitive aspects of the original contract. When a warlord regime more beholden to Japanese interests took control of Beijing in late 1924, Federal's intransigence provided the perfect cover to stall a project that Japan opposed from the outset. Federal's inflexibility helped obscure Japan's self-interest in the matter, and ironically allowed the pro-Japanese regime to lay claim to the mantle of Chinese nationalism as it steadfastly blocked the Federal project. The situation remained at a standstill until Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists came to power in 1927. Seeking to capitalize on the nationalist and anti-imperialist support that helped bring it power, the new Nationalist government canceled all foreign radio contracts, including Federal's, and began the development of China's international radio-telegraphy market anew.

RCA thought it could improve on Federal's performance, but it too stumbled badly. Following Federal Telegraph's flame out in China, RCA ended its partnership with Federal and became the primary American company seeking entry into China's international radiotelegraphy market. The company reached a 1928 agreement with China's new national government, the first one in nearly a generation to make a plausible claim to national control. It was still, to be sure, a government riddled with political factions and warlord holdovers. Nonetheless, RCA succeeded in getting two stations into operation, one in Shanghai and the other in the Manchurian city of Mukden. After Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, the company knew its controversial decision to keep the Mukden station operational would provoke strong opposition from the new Nationalist regime. As expected, the Chinese vigorously objected to RCA's cooperation with Japan in the territory violently seized from China. RCA, however, doubted that this weak regime, unable to defend its own territory from Japanese encroachments, could prevent it from continuing to work with a Mukden station that lay beyond the Chinese government's grasp. RCA ignored the Chinese protests.

RCA's cooperation with occupied Manchuria offended Chinese nationalist and patriotic sensibilities. And like Federal before it, RCA underestimated China's resolve to defend its communications interests. RCA dismissed the significance of the contract that the Communications Ministry gave to ITT to drive RCA out of Shanghai in retaliation. RCA claimed the ITT agreement violated its existing contractual rights. Recognizing that contract's links to Chiang's opponents in the ministry, RCA presumed Chiang's reassertion of control over the ministry

would lead to the abrogation of the ITT agreement. However, in the face of growing opposition surrounding China's futility against Japan, Chiang loyalists found it politically advantageous to continue the government's support of the ITT contract against the unpopular RCA once back in charge at the Communications Ministry. The dispute between RCA and China over ITT eventually reached The Hague, where a 1935 decision in favor of China blindsided RCA. The defeat at the Hague was central to RCA's decision to begin drawing down its interests in global telecommunications. In the final analysis, this effective use of The Hague bolstered the weak Chinese state by strengthening its sovereign authority over wireless at the expense of RCA.

The same disregard for the Chinese perspective dogged the American approach to the emerging Chinese broadcasting market of the 1920s and early 1930s. During that period, State Department personnel based in Washington and China regarded the country's legal restrictions on radio ownership and operation as illogical in light of broadcasting's development during those years. Many of these officials claimed that the Chinese people lacked the capacity to develop broadcasting and some imagined the Chinese would irrationally resist this latest technological wonder. Consequently, both Washington- and China-based American officials encouraged US nationals to ignore Chinese radio laws and the treaty agreements that applied Chinese radio restrictions to the country's foreign concessions. Even in the face of fierce Chinese protests, officials such as Nelson Johnson advocated the continued importation of radio sets and parts, as well as the continued operation of American-owned broadcasting stations. This advice was based on the presumption that there was little that the weak Chinese state could do to prevent Americans from enjoying broadcasting in China as they saw fit, particularly in the treaty ports such as Shanghai that fell outside of the Chinese state's direct jurisdiction.

This misreading of China's broadcasting market and state power provided Americans with another instructive lesson about the costs of underestimating the Nationalists. In China's political context of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the US position that Chinese radio laws could be considered optional is baffling. Considering that a thriving Chinese broadcasting market had emerged during the 1920s, those American assertions that the Chinese lacked the interest or capacity to develop broadcasting were almost comical in their ignorance. In fact, American radio programs that intruded on the airwaves provoked opposition from Chinese listeners immersed in the nationalism and anti-imperialism of the era. Considering that the bulk of this illicit American broadcasting

activity occurred within the limits of Shanghai's foreign-controlled International Settlement, American officials such as Minister Nelson Johnson saw little reason to comply with the inevitable Nationalist protests. This logic neglected to appreciate the vulnerability of once foreign-controlled areas that had just reverted to Chinese control. In such areas, the Chinese simply seized the offending equipment from Americans. Lack of jurisdiction over the International Settlement in Shanghai, the heart of China's nascent broadcasting market, did not deter the Nationalists either. Through relatively easy and cost-efficient jamming, the Nationalists targeted American stations with the effect of either forcing them to register or pushing them off the air altogether. An extraterritorial enclave provided no safe harbor for American radio in the face of determined Nationalist authorities. Using the limited power at its disposal, by 1936 the Nationalists had established effective control over broadcasting in China, despite intentional American efforts to circumvent Chinese authority.

The key American players in each of the above contestations – Federal Telegraph, RCA, and US officials – were all guilty of the same mistake: they confused the reality of a weak Chinese government with that of an ineffectual Chinese state. American overconfidence in the power of radio to achieve American ends and a propensity to equate American interests with universally desirable objectives contributed to critical misjudgments about the wider contexts into which American radio fit. The weak Chinese state, it turns out, did not need to exercise brute strength to effectively oppose radio projects that appeared overly partial to parochial American interests. The Chinese governments of the 1920s and 1930s, both the Nationalist regime and its weaker warlord predecessors, all had long-term ambitions for the control of China. In the context of the era's rising nationalism and anti-imperialism, these regimes could not afford to countenance any radio projects that favored foreign interests at the expense of Chinese ones. When Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists' nascent central government succeeded in bringing China out of its Warlord Era, that government owed a good portion of its popular support to its successful co-option of anti-imperialism and nationalism in China. Such support was not unconditional and could easily be squandered by poor policy choices. Given the possibilities of reining in American radio with minimal expense and strength, allowing American radio to go uncontested was not an option.

Yet American radio did not invariably antagonize Chinese nationalists. In the right circumstances, American radio could even be seen as China's ally. The Nationalist government's support of the American

missionary station XMHD is testament to that verity. In this case, the connections between the American missionary movement and the Nationalist regime's state-building initiatives worked in favor of that particular American radio initiative. The collaboration between American missionaries and the Nationalists in various rural, educational, and public health reform initiatives not only helped the station's efforts to secure the government's blessing, but led to top ranking Nationalists making appearances on the station. The station was, to be sure, distinctly American in character with regard to the nature, style, and content of its programming. There is, in fact, no substantive evidence to suggest that XMHD significantly increased Chinese conversions to Christianity as many of the station's proponents had promised. Like other American radio initiatives, those promises reflected the influence of popular albeit flawed perceptions of radio's influential powers. The critical distinction from the other ill-conceived American efforts was that XMHD, with its ties to Chinese-supported missionary reform efforts, exhibited its American characteristics in a way that benefited rather than challenged the Nationalist state.

Still, XMHD generated its own fair share of controversy. By identifying and allying with Chinese concerns, the station ultimately provoked Japanese opposition. While the Chinese approached American radio from the perspective of the state building, nationalist, and anti-imperialist concerns of the day, the Japanese viewed American radio through the prism of its own expansionist and imperialist objectives in China. That interpretive framework had in the early 1920s fueled Japan's opposition to Federal Telegraph's project as a challenge to Japanese telecommunications interests in China. However, this same Japanese perspective actually encouraged cooperation with RCA in Manchuria in the early 1930s as a means of building international support for Japan's widely condemned severing of that territory from Chinese control. XMHD returned American radio to the role of challenging Japanese interests. The station's pro-Chinese disposition and deep American ties manifested itself with especially critical reporting about Japan's actions in China after the 1937 outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. From the Japanese perspective, that unfavorable reporting reflected what they saw as a larger international bias against Japan that undermined the country's policies and goals. The Japanese therefore identified in XMHD a challenge to their vital interests in China. Subsequent Japanese initiatives to jam the station's broadcasts were consistent with broader Japanese efforts to manage the information reaching East Asia through the suppression of critical, often American, news sources.

California-based shortwave station W6XBE-KGEI and Shanghai-based American broadcaster XMHA experienced comparable treatment from the Japanese. Their wartime news programs also cast Japan in an unfavorable light. In XMHA's case, veteran reporter Carroll Alcott intentionally provoked the Japanese with his multiple daily newscasts. Alcott, however, insisted that the anti-Japanese venom he injected into his reports was entirely justified. Those hard-hitting reports were, he claimed, derived from a fair examination of the facts before him. This tension between the ideal of objective journalism and the inclination to take sides based on a presumably objective evaluation of the facts pervaded the Japanese-American news controversies of the late 1930s and early 1940s. In light of Alcott's intentional taunting, it is understandable why Japan hoped to silence XMHA's broadcasts and Alcott himself. W6XBE-KGEI experienced analogous treatment from the Japanese for its newscasts, even though that station's news reports originated from the United States and were not designed with the same explicit anti-Japanese intent that motivated Alcott. From the Japanese perspective, the problem was not that Alcott was a rogue American journalist, taking advantage of his Shanghai radio platform to embarrass the Japanese. It was, in Japan's view, that Alcott represented an all-too-typical American approach to journalism that consistently castigated Japan without any regard for what the Japanese considered their legitimate interests in East Asia. For that reason, American radio news, whether from XMHD, XMHA, or W6XBE-KGEI, became the consistent target of Japanese jamming in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Convictions about the influence of those stations, whether good or bad, underscored another aspect of popular but flawed interwar era perceptions of media power. Shanghai Trade Commissioner Viola Smith, for example, argued in 1935 that expanding an American broadcasting presence in China was desirable because it ensured "that the cultural, political, and economic thought and background of American life and ideals may go direct." That claim captured the prewar popularity of now suspect "magic bullet" or "hypodermic needle" theories of media influence. Such theories, which carried considerable weight among the era's media researchers, assumed that the beliefs and behavior of an audience would be predictably changed by exposure to media content. In these conceptualizations, mass media was the "magic bullet" or "hypodermic needle" that injected new ideas and behaviors directly into a complacent audience.² This view was apparently not exclusively American, since Japan's efforts to jam the stations – and even at one

point attempting to broadcast over W6XBE–KGEI's newscasts with its own English-language alternative – suggest a comparable conviction in audience complacency and malleability.

An audience, however, is not a passive recipient of information. Individuals construct their own meaning and significance of the media content they engage. Interpretations will vary among different groups depending on how that content intersects with their respective beliefs, concerns, and interests at any given time. The Chinese listener from Chapter 3 who objected to a Palmolive commercial on the Chinese airwaves is an example of this dynamic. Rather than foster an interest in the American product, as Viola Smith might have expected, this listener instead became furious at the perceived imperialist intrusion on China's airwaves. Meanwhile, Carroll Alcott was popular among an American audience in China already predisposed to disliking the Japanese, while the Japanese for obvious reasons interpreted the significance of Alcott's hostile newscasts in a much less favorable light. In the case of W6XBE–KGEI, its newscasts were not created with a specific intent to demean Japan. Nonetheless, the Japanese still identified the shortwave station as a threat to be attacked in light of pre-existing convictions about the biases American journalism manifested toward Japan. At the same time, alienating a Japanese audience did not necessarily ensure a receptive Chinese audience for W6XBE–KGEI. The station's efforts to produce a Chinese language newscast shortly after Pearl Harbor resulted in bulletins so poorly translated and read by announcers who spoke such terrible Chinese that these broadcasts, according to the Chinese Ministry of Communications, sounded "very much like propaganda from Japan."³ Collectively, these examples demonstrate that the audience controls the meaning and significance ascribed to any given program and can do so in unexpected and unintended ways.

It should not be surprising then that W6XBE–KGEI enjoyed its greatest success in engaging an American audience with its American programming. That success provides the only example in this study in which an American radio project actually achieved at least one of its goals, albeit not the central one. Viola Smith's acknowledgment of the station's potential appeal to Americans living in China was a relatively small part of her overall pitch for the station. Smith placed her central emphases on touting the station's ability to foster universally beneficial economic and cultural exchanges through the extension of particularly American influences into China. Those idealistic notions notwithstanding, the station excelled *only* in catering to its American audience. Its American-style newscasts, NBC radio programs, and the special *Sunday*

Mailbag program built a devoted American following for the station in China and wider East Asia.

W6XBE–KGEI's impact was not that it changed its audience by exposing it to new information. The station did not encourage the promised transnational cultural and economic exchanges among Americans and Asians. Instead, its main contribution was to provide new opportunities for Americans to engage familiar media content and cultural forms. In this regard, W6XBE–KGEI fit into a wider American media milieu of print publications, Hollywood movies, American consumer products, postal services, phonographs, photographs, and transportation options that kept these expatriates in close contact with their distant homeland. W6XBE–KGEI ultimately demonstrated how global media could actually work against two-way cultural exchanges. By providing easy access to familiar media content, Americans could remain insulated from the local and unfamiliar media environment that otherwise surrounded them. Moreover, as the examples of Japanese and Chinese resistance to American radio programming demonstrated, the same programs that could be so familiar and comforting to Americans living abroad elicited quite contrary reactions from audiences rooted in different cultural and political contexts.

The overall pattern of expanding international communications represented by American efforts to extend their radio interests into China created a new space – the air – for these actors to contest long-standing antagonisms. Deeper fights over imperialism, nationalism, treaty rights, and sovereignty became subsumed into new fights over radio. In trying to wage these disputes through radio from the 1920s through the early 1940s, Americans too often lost sight of the context that surrounded radio in East Asia. They pursued courses of action that demonstrated an almost blind faith in this technology's ability to achieve American goals single-handedly. With policies and actions too often ill-suited to the context at hand and thereby ill-equipped to achieve the objectives being pursued, it is little wonder American designs for radio in China never achieved their lofty expectations.

Unrealistic expectations for new communications and media technologies still pervade the American discourse. The new digital technologies of the twenty-first century, according to one best selling author and respected scholar, promise to be “a natural force drawing people into greater world harmony.” Steve Case, cofounder and first chief executive of pioneering Internet service provider AOL Online concurred. The Internet, he claimed, will be “the empowering agent for many of the changes sweeping our world” that promises to “transform virtually

every aspect of the economy and society" while breaking down "old limitations and barriers." Speaking at the close of the twentieth century, President Bill Clinton saw those barriers falling in China, which had been under the control of an authoritarian communist regime that had ousted the Nationalists in 1949. The American president had no doubt that the Chinese government would find it "impossible to maintain a closed political and economic society" once Internet users in that country exceeded 100 million.⁴

As with radio, these inflated and deterministic expectations about twenty-first century communications lost sight of the wider societal context into which technology fits. The Internet does not just encourage the free flow of information but also provides the state with new communications tools for control and surveillance. The Chinese state had indeed retained its authoritarian grasp even as the country's number of Internet users surpassed American Internet users at more than 210 million in 2008. Rather than simply bring people together, in recent years the "cyberspace" over which Internet communications travel emerged as a hotly contested realm of international relations in its own right. Comparable to the jamming of American radio stations, in the early twenty-first century the United States faced the prospect of Chinese sabotage against American websites due to perceptions that they conveyed anti-Chinese content. Much like Japanese efforts to jam W6XBE-KGEI and broadcast Japanese approved English-language news in its place, Chinese hackers accessed American websites and replaced offending content with pro-Chinese or anti-American material. Comparable to the contestations that surrounded American radio news of the 1930s and 1940s, critical coverage of China's Tibet policies in Western and especially American media during the lead up to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing earned a harsh rebuke from the Chinese. Dubbed the "Crooked News Network," CNN found itself the target of particularly scathing critiques and the subject of a popular Chinese song entitled "Don't be too CNN." Having its own troubled history with the American news network, the Japanese perhaps empathized with those charges, possibly recalling their earlier anger over CNN's coverage of Japan as dithering in its support of the US-led intervention in Iraq during the first Persian Gulf War of 1991.⁵

Through its exploration of American efforts to expand radio into China during the 1920s and 1930s, this study has aimed to demonstrate how communications and media are inextricably intertwined with their wider societal contexts. The Americans leading those efforts frequently lacked a sound grasp of that complicated relationship.

Unexpected social, cultural, political, economic, and technical changes (or some combination of those variables) can wreak havoc on even the most carefully considered assumptions, plans, and predictions that lay behind any project.⁶ Poorly conceived projects, a description fitting of interwar era American radio initiatives in China, are even more vulnerable to disruptions from unexpected quarters. So many of the difficulties surrounding American radio in China emerged when its various advocates misunderstood communications technology as the primary agent of societal change, made decisions that lost sight of the complexities of their present, and instead rested their conceptualizations of international communications and global media on questionable visions for the future. In this way, American radio projects in China, each so promising at their outset, fell prey to the myopia and resultant miscalculations that ultimately defined them.

Notes

Introduction “The Great Blessings That Radio Will Engender in This Old and Populous Land”: American Expectations and Radio in China

1. “Program Starts at Eight O’clock: News, Music, Entertainment,” *China Press*, 23 January 1923, copy of article forwarded to Secretary of State Charles Hughes, 893.74/278, Record Group 59, Department of State Central Decimal Files 1910–29, United States National Archives at College Park, Maryland (hereinafter abbreviated as DSNA followed by the years covered in the collection cited – e.g., 1910–29, 1930–39, and so on); Carlton Benson, “From Teahouse to Radio: Storytelling and the Commercialization of Culture in 1930s Shanghai” (Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1996), 78–82.
2. “Program Starts at Eight O’clock: News, Music, Entertainment.”
3. Irene Kuhn, *Assigned to Adventure* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1938), 312–14. In her memoir, Kuhn incorrectly identifies Delay’s station as China’s first broadcasting outlet.
4. C.H. Robertson, “10,000 Miles of Radio Lectures in China,” in *Radio Broadcast*, September 1923, 382–91, held at the Broadcast Pioneers Library of American Broadcasting, University of Maryland at College Park (hereinafter referred to as the Library of American Broadcasting). On Robertson and his work in China Shirley S. Garrett, *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895–1926* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 91, 131; Peter Chen-main Wang, “A Patriotic Christian Leader in Changing China – Yu Rizhang in the Turbulent 1920s,” in *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, ed. C.X. George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 36.
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7. Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 408–9. For a more particular focus on the United States, see Michael Adas, *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America’s Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
8. Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American East Asian Relations*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1992), 18.
9. Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 15.

10. Arthur Power Dudden, *The American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), vii. Michael Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 312–13. Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific*, xvi. Adas, *Dominance by Design*, 31, 430. See also Jonathan Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisors in China, 1620–1960*, revised ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 293. In part, this study addresses Walter LaFeber's call for greater attention to the role that technology played in US foreign affairs in his article "Technology and U.S. Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1–19.
11. *The Radio Decade*, RCA publication, 1930, pp. 7, 10, Series 134 (History of Radio Broadcasting) Box 537, George H. Clark Radioana Collection, Archives Center at the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution (hereinafter referred to as Clark Radioana Collection).
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13. "Address of President Coolidge at the Opening Meeting of the International Radiotelegraph Conference," Washington D.C., 4 October 1927, folder "Radio: Conferences—International—Washington (1927)—Addresses by Hoover, Coolidge, et. al., 1927, October and November," Box 492, Herbert Hoover Commerce Department Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa (hereinafter referred to as Hoover Commerce Papers).
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17. Quoted in Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 306; for an analysis of the popular enthusiasm directed toward radio by the 1920s, see 292–314.
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21. Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), esp. 89, 92, 94, 96; quote is from page 121. For the World War I impact on American thinking about international radio, see Jonathan Reed Winkler, *Nexus: Strategic Communications and American Security in World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), esp. 11, 40, 50, 60, 95, and 163.
22. Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith, "Introduction," in Marx and Smith, eds., *Does Technology Drive History*, ix–xii, esp. xi.
23. Quoted in Menahem Blondheim, *New Over the Wires: The Telegraph and the Flow of Public Information in America, 1844–1897* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 191.
24. "The Problems and Prospects of Radio," Address By General J.G. Harbord before the Meat Packers Institute and The University of Chicago, 21 October 1925, #305a, Series 95 (Articles on Radio Subjects), Box 393, Clark Radioana Collection.
25. John Tierney, "Better. Our Oldest Computer Upgraded," in *New York Times*, section 6 (magazine), 28 September 1997, 46.
26. Pat Nason, "Analysis: Is Podcasting the New Radio?," 7 April 2005, *United Press International*, http://www.upi.com/Odd_News/2005/04/07/Analysis_Is_podcasting_the_new_radio/UPI-28111112890695 (last accessed 26 September 2010).
27. James Schwoch, *Global TV: New Media and the Cold War, 1946–1969* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009). Quote is from 152.
28. Jane Abbate, *Inventing the Internet* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 5–6.
29. Benson, "From Teahouse to Radio"; Carlton Benson, "Consumers are also Soldiers: Subversive Songs From Nanjing Road during the New Life Movement," in *Inventing Nanjing Road: Commercial Culture in Shanghai, 1900–1945*, ed. Sherman Cochran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Carlton Benson, "Back to Business as Usual: The Resurgence of Commercial Radio in Gudao Shanghai" in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai Under Japanese Occupation*, ed. Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
30. Gregory Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan, 1918–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Roger W. Purdy, "'Information Imperialism' and Japan," in the *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 1 no. 3 (Fall 1992): esp. 295–325.
31. For example, see Parkes Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); James C. Hsiung

and Steven I. Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory: The War With Japan, 1937–1945* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992); Youli Sun, *China and the Origins of the Pacific War* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993); and Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Policing Shanghai 1927–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

1 “We Owe Nothing to Their Sensibilities”: Federal Telegraph, the Open Door, and the Washington System in 1920s China

1. Schurman to the Secretary of State Charles Hughes, 27 September 1921, 893.74/193, DSNA 1910–29. This document is reprinted in *The Federal Telegraph Company's Contract with the Chinese Government: Correspondence and Documents* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1925), 79–80 (hereinafter *Federal Telegraph*). For the specific contract, see “Contract between the Federal Telegraph Company of California and the Chinese Government, January 8, 1921,” in *Federal Telegraph*, Annex I, pp. i–iv. Research for this chapter began with the DSNA 1910–29 files. I subsequently used the published documents from the *Federal Telegraph* volume. The two collections overlap, but they are not identical. While much of the material I first encountered at the National Archives also appears in the *Federal Telegraph* volume, some does not. Some original documents that are reprinted in the *Federal Telegraph* volume are paraphrased or otherwise modified from the original. Any documents that are reprinted in the *Federal Telegraph* volume are identified, even those that I first discovered while researching in the State Department files. Documents from DSNA 1910–29 that are not identified as being reprinted in the *Federal Telegraph* volume were located only in the more complete State Department files.
2. Schurman to Hughes, 27 September 1921, 893.74/193, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 79–80.
3. For Reinsch's support of Federal see Reinsch to the Secretary of State Robert Lansing, 27 March 1919, 893.74/18, DSNA 1910–29. For background on Reinsch, see Warren Cohen, *The Chinese Connection and American-East Asian Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 301; Iriye, *Across the Pacific*, 133–4; James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and American East Asia Policy, 1911–1915* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 49, 50, 88. Quote is from Paul Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1922; reprinted, Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Company, 1967), 80.
4. Background information on Crane from Jacob J. Sulzbach, Jr., “Charles Crane, Woodrow Wilson, and Progressive Reform: 1909–1921,” (Ph.D. diss., Texas A&M University, 1994), esp. 1–8. Crane's quote is from Crane to the Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, 9 February 1921, 893.74/91, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 5.
5. Background information on Schurman from “Obituary: Jacob Gould Schurman, 1854–1942,” *Science* 96 (28 August 1942): 197. Schurman to Hughes, 27 September 1921.

6. On the Open Door see Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*; Paul A. Varg, *The Making of a Myth: The United States and China, 1897–1912* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1968); Marilyn B. Young, *The Rhetoric of Empire: American China Policy, 1895–1901* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893–1901* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967).
7. For the Warlord Era, see Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China, 1916–1928* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).
8. Young, *Rhetoric of Empire*, esp. 12; Hunt, *Making of a Special Relationship*, esp. 299. See also David Anderson, *Imperialism and Idealism: American Diplomats in China, 1861–1898* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), esp. 192; and Jerry Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door: American and China, 1905–1921* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1971), esp. 176–202.
9. President of the Federal Telegraph Company Rennie P. Schwerin to Hughes, 8 June 1921, 893.74/142, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 53–7.
10. Memorandum of conversation between Schwerin, Walter Rogers (wireless expert of the State Department at the Washington Conference), and Nelson Johnson (head of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs), 30 December 1921, 893.74/211, DSNA 1910–29.
11. For Schwerin's background, see Hugh Aitken, *The Continuous Wave: Technology and American Radio, 1900–1932* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 294–9; E. Mowbray Tate, *Transpacific Steam: The Story of Steam Navigation from the Pacific Coast of North America to the Far East and the Antipodes, 1867–1941* (New York: Cornwall Books, 1986), 253–5.
12. Aitken, *Continuous Wave*, 298–300; Hughes to the Chargé in Japan Edward Bell, 1 July 1921, 893.74/115, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 63.
13. Mitsui Bussan Kaisha was one of the major Japanese *zaibatsu*, the huge family-based industrial-banking conglomerates that drove Japan's modern economy while benefiting from favorable government economic policies and close ties to the military.
14. Michael J. Hogan, *Informal Entente: The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1918–1928* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977), 129–58; Aitken, *Continuous Wave*, 492; Daniel Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 188. See also "Old Cable Deals in China Recalled," in the *New York Times*, 19 August 1928, 41.
15. Japanese Minister to the United States Yukichi Obata to Crane, 16 February 1921, enclosed in Crane to Colby, 17 February 1921, 893.74/111, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 16. The reference to the particular contract clause guaranteeing Japan's revenue is from Hughes to Schurman, 13 March 1923, 893.74/278a, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 115–16. The comparison between Mitsui-Federal competition and railroad competition is noted in Bell to Hughes, 11 April 1921, 893.74/115, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 35–6.
16. For information on the various positions of Japanese elites, see Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan and the World Since 1868* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1995),

- 47–72, esp. 48. Herbert Bix's biography of Hirohito convincingly makes the case that the Japanese monarchy in general and Hirohito in particular played a much more active and involved role in governing Japan than is typically acknowledged, especially in matters that involved the military. Hirohito became regent for his physically and mentally ill father in November 1921, in the midst of the Federal controversy. Hirohito formally ascended to the throne in 1926. See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 91–123. On the growth of Japan's electrical communications manufacturing industry and exports, see Christopher Howe, *The Origins of Japanese Trade Supremacy: Development and Technology in Asia from 1540 to the Pacific War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 302–3. A 1936 *North China Daily News* article underscored the steadily increasing significance of these exports over the next decade; the article commented that since 1930 "most noticeable increase [in radio imports to China] is shown by Japan, whose shipments to China have increased enormously;" see "Extract from the North China Daily News of April 28, 1936," p. 25, File U001-04-0002812, "Transmission Electrical Messages: Radio Broadcasting and Receiving Stations: Control," Records of the Secretariat of the Shanghai Municipal Council, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Shanghai, China (hereinafter SMC Records).
17. Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 134.
 18. Study prepared by A.P. Winton (of the foreign trade advisor's office in the State Department's Economic Intelligence Department), 19 March 1919, Box 8 (Confidential Correspondence, 1917–26), RG 38, Records of the Chief of Naval Operations, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland. I would like to thank Jonathan Winkler for bringing this document to my attention.
 19. A list of the various heads of state, prime ministers and cabinets can be found in Ch'i, *Warlord Politics*, 243.
 20. Harry W. Kirwin, "The Federal Telegraph Company: A Testing of the Open Door," *Pacific Historical Review* 22, no. 3 (August 1953): 281. Foreign interests seeking a contract were also known to include an up-front payment – some called it a bribe – in order to prompt a ministry to sign off on an agreement, a facet that further enriched the respective ministry (or minister).
 21. The Chargé in China A.B. Ruddock to Hughes, 27 August 1921, 893.74/185, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 75–6.
 22. Ruddock to Hughes, 27 August 1921.
 23. Biographical information on Yan Huiqing comes from John Benjamin Powell and Hollington Kong Tong, *Who's Who in China, Containing the Pictures and Biographies of Some of China's Political, Financial, Business, and Professional Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Shanghai: Millard's Review, 1920), 309–10, and Roberta Allbert Dayer, *Bankers and Diplomats in China, 1917–1925* (Totowa, NJ: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1981), 113, n. 73.
 24. Ruddock to Hughes, 26 August 1921, 893.74/174, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 74–5.
 25. Ruddock to Hughes, 22 August 1921 (893.74/187, DSNA 1910–29), 26 August 1921 and 27 August 1921; all preceding documents reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 74–6.

26. Ruddock to Hughes, 7 September 1921, 893.74/177, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 78.
27. Hughes to Ruddock, 29 August 1921, 893.74/174, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 77.
28. Ruddock to Hughes, 26 August 1921; Ruddock to Hughes, 7 September 1921; see also Ruddock to Hughes, 2 September 1921, 893.74/175, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 77.
29. Schwerin, “Memorandum regarding representations of the Federal Telegraph Company,” 9 June 1922, enclosed with RCA Secretary John Elwood to General Electric Vice President A.G. Davis, 19 June 1922; RCA General Counsel John Griggs, “Memorandum of legal suggestions on agreement between the Republic of China and the Federal Telegraph Company as contained in original agreement of January 8, 1921, and supplemental agreement of September 19, 1921;” both documents in file 87.2.125.B, folder 264A, Box 125B, Papers of Owen D. Young, Special Collections and Archives, St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York (hereinafter Owen Young Papers).
30. Schurman to Hughes, 27 September 1921.
31. On the American view of coercion as a policy device toward China, see Hunt, *Making of a Special Relationship*, 197–8. For Schurman’s background and views, see Dudden, *The American Pacific*, 90 (including quote); Peter W. Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and the United States, 1899–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 58, 62; H.W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (New York: Oxford University Press), 52, 67–8, 75; Jacob Gould Schurman, “Philippine Fundamentals,” in *Gunton’s Magazine* XXII (January–June 1902): esp. 313–15.
32. Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921–1931*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1990), 17–19; Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China’s Turning Point, 1924–1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 163.
33. Federal’s precarious finances are discussed in Schurman to Hughes, 10 February 1922, 893.74/219; Rogers to Hughes, 10 March 1922, 893.74/347; Hughes to Schurman, 17 May 1922, 893.74/238. For Schwerin’s quote, see Schwerin to Hughes, 2 August 1922, 893.74/244; preceding documents from DSNA 1910–29; reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 88, 91, 98–100. See also John P. Rossi, “The U.S. Government, RCA, and Radio Communications with East Asia, 1919–1928,” *Radical History Review* 33 (1985): 38–42.
34. Aitken, *Continuous Wave*, 491–3.
35. Griggs, “Memorandum of legal suggestions.”
36. *Ibid.*
37. The agreement between RCA and Federal Telegraph of California is reprinted in *Federal Telegraph* (n. 1 above), Annex IV and Annex IV-A, xii–xvii; see also Peter Hugill, *Global Communications Since 1844: Geopolitics and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 122. For Schwerin’s trip to China and the objectives he hoped to achieve, see Schwerin to Hughes, 29 August 1922, 893.74/246; Acting Secretary of State William Philips to Schwerin, 31 August 1922, 893.74/246; Hughes to Schurman, 2 September 1923, 893.74/231; Philips to Schurman, 7 September 1922, 893.74/246; Schurman to Hughes, 29 November 1922, 893.74/259; all documents from DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 100–3.

38. Schwerin's comments were forwarded in Schurman to Hughes, 12 June 1923, 893.74/318, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 131–2 (in the reprint, quoted portions appear slightly different from the original).
39. On Yoshizawa's threats, see Schwerin to RCA, 8 June 1923, enclosed with letter from Harbord to Hughes, 9 June 1923, 893.74/322, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 129. For Hanihara's position, see Head of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs John V.A. MacMurray to Hughes, 18 May 1923, 893.74/247, DSNA 1910–29; on Hanihara's relationship with Hughes, see LaFeber, *The Clash*, 185. Schwerin's comments were forwarded in Schurman to Hughes, 12 June 1923 (in the reprint, quoted portion reads slightly different from the original).
40. Schurman to Hughes, 13 July 1923, 893.74/352, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted *Federal Telegraph*, 144. Harbord's and Young's comments were enclosed in this communication. Quoted text from Schurman to Hughes, 18 July 1923, 893.74/376, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 146. Gu's biographer, Stephen G. Craft, presents Gu as a Chinese patriot committed to strengthening and modernizing China who, on the basis of his education and experience, looked to the United States as China's natural partner that could help achieve that objective. See Stephen G. Kraft, *V.K. Wellington Koo and the Emergence of Modern China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), chap. 1, esp. 21–2.
41. A Sino-French dispute over indemnity payments dating back to the turn-of-the-century precipitated the problem. The French used this dispute to justify delaying the ratification of a Washington Conference treaty on tariff revision. The Americans, British, and Japanese – already alarmed by growing Chinese radicalism and its implications for their interests in China – used the crisis to justify their own delays in ratifying the treaties until the problem with the French was satisfactorily resolved (thereby giving them additional time to ensure the security of their own positions in China). See Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 30–4; Iriye, *After Imperialism*, 27–37.
42. For the Ministry's position on interest payments, see the memorandum of the conversation between RCA Vice President and General Attorney William Brown and Representatives of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs, 10 January 1924, 893.74/429; and Schwerin to Hughes, 18 January 1924, 893.74/424, DSNA, 1910–29 (18 January 1924 document is reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 182). For the Chinese government's position on attaching a Chinese official with decision-making authority to the project and opening the books to auditors of both parties, see "Demands Made by the Chinese Government on the Federal Telegraph Company of Delaware for Modifications of and Additions to Contract of January 8th 1921, Supplemental Agreement of September 19th, 1921, and the Letter of July 13th, 1923," enclosed with Schwerin to MacMurray, 8 September 1924, 893.74/495, and Bell to Hughes, 20 September 1924, 893.74/496, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 214–15, 216–17, respectively. On the Chinese blocking of funds and land acquisition Hughes to the American Legation in China, 23 January 1924, 893.74/432, DSNA 1910–29; and Bell to Hughes, 9 September 1924, 893.74/491, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 215.
43. Schurman to Hughes 23 April 1924, 893.74/459, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 200.

44. Biographical information on Shi Zhaoji is from Powell and Tong, eds., *Who's Who in Modern China*, 186, 157–8.
45. Harbord to Schwerin, 10 November 1924, enclosed with Harbord to Hughes, 10 November 1924, 893.74/497, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 218.
46. Memorandum of conversations between Assistant Secretary of State Leland Harrison and MacMurray with RCA's Brown, 13 June 1923, 893.74/329, DSNA, 1910–29.
47. Schurman to Hughes, 30 May 1924, 893.74/471, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 205–6.
48. MacMurray to Hughes, 9 June 1924, 893.74/471, DSNA, 1910–29.
49. Bell to Hughes, 20 September 1924.
50. Harbord to Young, 27 August 1923, and Harbord to Schwerin, 8 November 1923, file 87.2.125, folder 264B, Owen Young Papers.
51. The Japanese Embassy to the Department of State, 24 December 1924, 893.74/502, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 222–3.
52. Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 3, 204–7; Iriye, *After Imperialism*, 27.
53. For the origins and implications of the Zhili-Fengtian battle, see Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, esp. 3, 46, 90, 127, 175–80, 204–7.
54. Brown to Harrison, 31 March 1925, 893.74/556, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 239–40. In this communication, RCA's Brown forwarded to Washington the information sent over by Manton Davis, RCA's representative in Beijing, in a telegram dated 17 March 1925.
55. Harbord to the Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and Harrison, 1 July 1925, file 87.2.126, Folder 264E, Owen Young Papers. In his correspondence with Washington, Harbord quoted the text of the Japanese reply, dated 1 June 1925.
56. Schurman to Kellogg, 12 April 1925, 893.74/546, DSNA 1910–29, reprinted in *Federal Telegraph*, 244; cablegram from Colonel Manton Davis, RCA Representative in China, 19 June 1925, 893.74/578, DSNA 1910–29.
57. Takuma Dan to Charles M. Muchnic (of the American Locomotive Sales Corporation), 3 February 1925, file 87.2.126, folder 264E, Owen Young Papers.
58. MacMurray to Hughes, 9 June 1924, 893.74/471, and MacMurray to Hughes, 18 May 1923, 893.74/347, DSNA 1910–29. For background on MacMurray, see Waren Cohen, *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 92–4; see also Arthur Waldron's introduction in John V. MacMurray and Arthur Waldron, *How the Peace Was Lost: The 1935 Memorandum, Developments Affecting American Policy in the Far East*, ed. Arthur Waldron. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 1–2, 10.
59. Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 322–3; Karen Garner, *Precious Fire: Maud Russell and the Chinese Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 68–70. Thorburn's quote is from pages 69–70 of the Garner book.
60. Cohen, *American Response to China*, 93–6; Waldron's introduction in MacMurray and Waldron, *How the Peace Was Lost*, 1–4, 8–10, 35–9; MacMurray to Kellogg, 11 June 1926, 893.74/691, DSNA 1910–29.
61. Memorandum of General Harbord's conversation with the State Department, 12 May 1926, File 87.2.126, Folder 264E, Owen Young Papers.

62. On MacMurray and Kellogg, see Cohen, *American Response to China*, 89, 96; Waldron's introduction in MacMurray and Waldron, *How the Peace Was Lost*, 21–6
63. On the cost of shortwave transmission versus the older "long wave" alternatives, see Daniel Headrick, "Shortwave Radio and Its Impact on International Communications Between the Wars," in *History and Technology* 11, no.1 (1994): 24
64. For the Nationalists' growth in political, military, and economic power in the years leading up to the Northern Expedition, see Ch'i, *Warlord Politics*, esp. 196–239. For the Northern Expedition, see Donald Jordan, *The Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926–1928* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976).
65. Schwerin's views paraphrased in Harbord to Head of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs Nelson Johnson, 2 August 1928, 893.74/854, DSNA 1910–29; Harbord to Schwerin, 2 August 1928, 893.74/854, DSNA 1910–29.
66. MacMurray (now the American Minister to China) to the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs C.T. Wang, 31 October 1929, 893.74/880, reprinted in United States, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 830–1.
67. Aitken, *Continuous Wave*, 493.
68. For Chinese strategies to influence the incorporation of railroad and telegraph technologies in the late nineteenth century, see Zhang Zhong, "The Transfer of Network Technologies to China, 1860–1898," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1989); see also Erik Baark, *Lightning Wires: The Telegraph and China's Technological Modernization, 1860–1890* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1997).
69. Iriye, *After Imperialism*, 87; Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 172.
70. "Developments Affecting American Policy in the Far East," prepared for the State Department by John Van Antwerp MacMurray, 711.93/383, DSNA 1930–39, reprinted in MacMurray and Waldron, *How the Peace Was Lost*, 67–8, 126.

2 "We Are Not Interested in the Politics of the Situation": The Radio Corporation of America in Nationalist China, 1928–37

1. "Text of messages exchanged upon the occasion of opening direct radio telegraph service between San Francisco and Shanghai by RCA Communications, Inc." n.d., #316a, box 196, Series 14 (General History), Clark Radioana Collection.
2. RCA Press Release, 6 December 1930, box 131, Series 5 (History of Radio Companies), Clark Radioana Collection.
3. This chapter's application of the concept of "transnational structuring," is derived from Gregory Nowell, *Mercantile States and the World Oil Cartel, 1900–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), esp. 33–5, 43.
4. Chang Ching-kiang [Zhang Jingjiang, a.k.a. Zhang Renjie] to RCA's Board of Directors, 10 July 1928, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence

- 1933 (9 of 13)," box 581, Records of MCI International, Inc., Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware (hereinafter referred to as MCI International Papers) [MCI's acquisition of RCA Communications in 1987 is the reason why these RCA files are kept in the MCI archives]; RCA President James Harbord to First National Bank of Los Angeles President (and economic advisor to President Calvin Coolidge) Henry M. Robinson, 27 September 1927, file 87.7.126, folder 264D, box 126, Owen Young Papers; Harbord to Federal Telegraph Company of Delaware President R.P. Schwerin, 2 August 1928, 893.74/854, DSN 1910–29. On Zhang Jingjiang's relationship with Chiang Kai-shek, see Ming K. Chan, *Precarious Balance: Hong Kong between China and Britain, 1842–1992* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), 87, n. 7. Zhang even officiated Chiang's 1921 wedding to his second wife, Chen Jieru; see Chen Jieru, *Chiang Kai-Shek's Secret Past: The Memoir of his Second Wife, Ch'en Chieh-ju* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 38.
5. For the proposed RCA Communications sale to ITT, see Robert Sobel, *ITT: The Management of Opportunity* (New York: Times Books, 1983), 61–4. For Sarnoff's remarks, see Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate Commerce, Commission on Communications, 71st Congress, 2nd Session, December 10, 1929, 1247.
 6. For the Northern Expedition, see Jordan, *The Northern Expedition*. For Nationalist state-building efforts, see Lloyd Eastman, "Nationalist China During the Nanking [Nanjing] Decade," in *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927–1949*, ed. sLloyd Eastman, Jerome Ch'en, Suzanne Pepper, and Lyman Van Slyke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1–52; and Robert Bedeski, "China's Wartime State," in Hsiung and Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory*, 33–49. Edward McCord explores the extension of Nationalist state power on the local level and its effect on the eventual Communist rise to power after 1949 in "Local Militia and State Power in Nationalist China," *Modern China* 25, no. 2 (1999): 115–41.
 7. Chu Chia-hua [Zhu Jiahua], *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1937), 151. Prior to his service as Minister of Education and Minister of Communications, Zhu served as the Commissioner of Civil Affairs in Zhejiang province. He was elected to the Central Executive Committee of the Nationalist party in 1929 and then became the Chairman of the Zhejiang provincial government. He had also served as president of Nanjing's Central University. See R. Keith Schoppa, *Blood Road: The Mystery of Shen Dingyi in Revolutionary China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 12; Donald A. Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931–1932* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 242.
 8. Guo Taiqi is quoted in the American Minister in China John V.A. MacMurray to Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, 9 January 1928, 893.74/800, DSN 1910–29, reprinted in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1928, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 557–8.
 9. The regime's position on radio's and further unification is noted in the American Trade Commissioner in China A. Viola Smith "Telecommunications-

- China," Special Report No. S-11, 23 July 1937, box 124, RG 151, Records Relating to the Commercial Attaches' Reports, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce (BFDC), Department of Commerce, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereinafter BFDC Attachés' Reports); see also Chang to RCA's Board of Directors, 10 July 1928; for the 1929 Telecommunications Act, see Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 152.
10. For international agreements and the expansion of China's domestic and international radiotelegraphy, see Rudolf Löwenthal, "Public Communications in China, before July 1937," in *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 22, no. 1 (1938): 53–5; Wen Yu-ching, "Electrical Communications," in *Chinese Year Book*, 2nd issue (1936–37), 1086–95, 1122–4; Wen Yu-ching, "Electrical Communications," in *Chinese Year Book*, 3rd issue (1936–37): 966, 969–74, 988–91; A. V. Smith, "Communications Questionnaire, Special Report No. S-22, 30 October 1935, pp. 9–12, box 120, folder "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1935–October–November," BFDC Attachés' Reports. With regard to the improved management of finances, Oberlin-educated Kong Xiangxi and Harvard-educated Song Ziwen are credited for using their ties to the China's financial world to improve the efficiency of the Chinese bureaucracy; see Tien-wei Wu, "Contending Political Forces during the War of Resistance," in Hsiung and Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory*, 51–78. For equipment purchases, see Yen Jen-kuang [Yan Renguang], "Telecommunications," in *Chinese Year Book*, 1st issue (1935–36), 688. For subsidies of other telecommunications services through radio profits, see Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 196.
 11. Zhang's aspirations for national leadership (and the long odds that stood in the way of such aspirations) are commented on in David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 8–10. For the Mukden contract, see RCA's China Representative George Shecklen to RCA Communications Vice President and General Manager William A. Winterbottom, 18 January 1934, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, 1928–1934 (13 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers. For the Nationalist's concerns over RCA's recognition of their authority, see Chang to RCA's Board of Directors, 10 July 1928.
 12. Zhu Jiahua pointed out that even through the Shanghai terminus was often referred to as a single station, the "high powered station" was in fact three separate stations: a central receiving station was built in Liuhong, the central transmitting station at Chenju, and a branch station at Fenglinchao – all in the neighborhood of Shanghai. For this detail, see Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 152.
 13. For Zhang's relationship with Japan, see Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919–1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 30; LaFeber, *The Clash*, 152. For more specific reference to the assistance Zhang received from Japan, see Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 3, 204–7; Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism*, 27. With regard to how Zhang's Japanese connections hurt him in the context of the Northern Expedition and China's rising nationalism, see Jordan, *The Northern Expedition*, 160. For the Seiyukai-Minseito political divide through the 1928 elections, see Barnhart, *Japan and the World*, 78–87; LaFeber, *The Clash*, 134,

- 151–3, 162. For Zhang Xueliang's relationship with the Chinese Nationalists and Japan in the late 1920s and early 1930s, see Barnhart, *Japan and the World*, 31; LaFeber, *The Clash*, 152–3, 162; Coble, *Facing Japan*, 21–31. For the relationship between Manchuria's Northeastern Long Distance Radio and Long Distance Telegraph Administration and the regime in Nanjing, see the American Vice Consul at Mukden John Hubner, "Report on Radio Broadcasting and Receiving in the Mukden Consular District," 8 December 1931, 893.76/11, DSNA 1930–39; at the time of this report's writing Zhang Xueliang had been driven out of Manchuria two months before, but the report accounts for the situation that existed before Zhang withdrew. On the Nationalists' recognition of the Mukden agreement, the subsequent contract for a Shanghai-San Francisco connection, and rapid execution of those contracts, see Shecklen to Winterbottom, 18 January 1934.
14. For the Manchurian Incident, see Coble, *Facing Japan*, 11–18; LaFeber, *The Clash*, 164–74. On the Great Depression in Japan, the significance of Manchuria to Japan, and the Depression's impact on the Guangdong Army's view of Manchuria, see Barnhart, *Japan and the World*, 91–2, and LaFeber, *The Clash*, 161–3. For popular Japanese views linking Manchuria to a solution for Japan's domestic ills, see Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), esp. 262. For Zhang Xueliang's efforts to reduce Japanese influence in Manchuria, see Coble, *Facing Japan*, 22–3. For Japanese domestic politics and its relationship to the Manchurian Incident, see Barnhart, *Japan and the World*, 92–7. For a more detailed examination of the Minseito's reversal of fortune, see Gordon Mark Berger, *Parties out of Power in Japan, 1931–1941* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), esp. 37–43.
15. For the station's bombing, see the First Secretary of the American Legation in China Corenlus Van H. Engert to the Secretary of State Henry Stimson, 12 November 1931, 893.74/939, DSNA 1930–39; W.J. Richards, "Radio in China," in H.G.W. Woodhead, ed., *The China Year Book 1936*, (Shanghai: North China Daily News & Herald; repr., Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1969), 304. For Japan's request that RCA resume operations, see Counselor of the Legation in Beijing Mahlon F. Perkins, written for the American Minister in China Nelson Johnson to Stimson, 8 March 1932, 893.74/957, DSNA 1930–39.
16. Robert Sobel, *RCA* (New York: Stein and Day, 1986), 89–91, 99; See also Gleason Archer, *Big Business and Radio* (New York: The American Historical Company, Inc., 1939), 361.
17. For Chiang's foreign policy in response to the Manchuria Incident, see Youli Sun, *China and the Origins of the Pacific War*, 19–39. For RCA Victor in Japan, "RCA Abroad – In Japan," in *RCA Family Circle*, vol. 2, no. 8 (August 1936), 2. For broadcasting exchanges in 1931, see the listings of National Broadcasting Company's international programs in folder 9, box 38, Central Office Files of National Broadcasting Company Records, Mass Communications History Center of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison. On the profitability and vulnerability of RCA's US-Japan circuit, see Rossi, "The U.S. Government, RCA, and Radio Communications with East Asia," 40; William Winterbottom to RCA representative in Japan J. Francis Harris, 11 March 1933, file "Japan: Correspondence and Agreements, 1916–1935 (1 of

- 4)," box 586, MCI International Papers. Reference to the cancellation clause in the context of establishing a competing Japanese-American circuit is from RCA General Counsel Manton Davis to Winterbottom, 18 June 1934, file "Japan: Correspondence and Agreements, 1916–1935 (1 of 4)," box 586, MCI International Papers.
18. Shecklen's general comments on Americans in China from Shecklen to Winterbottom, 7 April 1932, folder "China: Correspondence (Manchuria) 1929–1940," box 582, MCI International Papers. Specific comments about the Mukden situation from Shecklen to Winterbottom, 16 September 1932, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
 19. Shecklen to Winterbottom, 7 April 1932.
 20. "Brief of the Intervener, RCA Communications, Inc.," in *Mackay Radio and Telegraph Company v. the Federal Communications Commission*; RCA Communications, Inc.; and the Western Union Telegraph Company, No. 6970 (United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, 1938), 25.
 21. Winterbottom to Shecklen, 2 May 1932, folder "China: Correspondence (Manchuria) 1929–1940," box 582, MCI International Papers.
 22. Johnson to Stimson, 4 April 1932, 893.74/959, DSN 1930–39.
 23. Telegram from the Bureau of International Telegraphs, Ministry of Communications, China, to Shecklen, 4 April 1932, file "China: Correspondence (Manchuria) 1929–1940," box 582, MCI International Papers.
 24. Shecklen to Winterbottom, telegraph, 6 April 1932, file "China: Correspondence (Manchuria) 1929–1940," box 582, MCI International Papers.
 25. Johnson to Stimson, 4 April 1932; quote from memorandum by the Head of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs Stanley Hornbeck, 8 April 1932, 811.7493 (M) RCA/6, DSN 1930–39, reprinted in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1932, vol. 3, The Far East (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 685–6.
 26. Memorandum regarding radio contracts between American concerns and foreign countries purporting to grant exclusive rights in respect to the transmission of messages, routes undesignated, 22 May 1928, 893.74/828, DSN 1910–29; see also A.B.C. Scull to J.R. McDonough, 12 March 1930, file 87.2.126, folder 264F, box 126, Owen Young Papers. McDonough and Scull were both executives with General Electric, RCA's parent company.
 27. Sun, *China and the Origins of the Pacific War*, 21–4; see also Coble, *Facing Japan*, esp. 17–18.
 28. "Notes Concerning the Mukden Station and the Mukden Traffic Contract and the Effect of These upon the Chinese Administration," enclosed with correspondence from Davis to Heinrich Schuloff, 5 June 1934, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, 1928–1934 (13 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers. Davis and Schuloff, a lawyer from Vienna, both represented RCA before The Hague. The direct quote from p. 7 of this document.
 29. For Western views of industrialized Japan, see Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*. For Hoover's experience in China, see Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs*

- of Herbert Hoover, 1874–1920: *Years of Adventure* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 35–72; direct quotes are from 70–1. For American policy regarding China and the Manchurian Incident, see Warren Cohen, “American Leaders in East Asia, 1931–1938,” in *American, Chinese, and Japanese Perspectives on Wartime Asia, 1931–1949*, ed. Akira Iriye and Warren Cohen (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1990), 1, 3–5; Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 50–63; Alfred L. Castle, *Diplomatic Realism: William R. Castle, Jr., and American Foreign Policy, 1919–1953* (Honolulu: Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation 1998), 67–91.
30. Sobel, *ITT*, 58–60. On the signing of the Mackay agreement, see George Shecklen to Chu Chia-hua [Zhu Jiahua], 28 April 1933, file “China: Chinese Arbitration, 1932–1933 (5 of 13),” box 581, MCI International Papers. On the opening of the Mackay circuit to the United States, see “Closer Contact with West; Radio Link with America Inaugurated,” 19 May 1933, *North China Daily News*, copy of article (and similar articles from other papers) located in file “China: Chinese Arbitration, 1932–1933 (6 of 13),” box 581, MCI International Papers.
 31. “Decision in the Arbitration Case between Radio Corporation of America versus the National Government of the Republic of China,” in *American Journal of International Law* 30, no. 3 (1936): 538, 544–7.
 32. Winterbottom to RCA President David Sarnoff, 4 May 1934, file “Japan: Correspondence and Agreements, 1916–1935 (1 of 4),” box 586, MCI International Papers; Archer, *Big Business and Radio*, 361, 398.
 33. Shecklen to Winterbottom, 22 July 1932, file “China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, 1927–1932 (1 of 13),” box 581, MCI International Papers. Harris to Winterbottom, 6 February 1933; William Winterbottom to J. Francis Harris, 11 March 1933; Winterbottom to Harris, 25 April 1933; Davis to Winterbottom, 18 June 1934; from file “Japan: Correspondence and Agreements, 1916–1935 (1 of 4),” box 586, MCI International Papers.
 34. For Chinese pressure on RCA to revise revenue sharing agreements, See China’s Director of the Communications Ministry’s Radio Administration Yu Ching-wen to Shecklen, 21 April 1930, and RCA Far Eastern representative Curtis H. Nance to Winterbottom, 17 October 1930, file “China: Correspondence, 1929–1938 (1 of 6),” box 582, MCI International Papers. From the MCI International Papers, see also Winterbottom to Sarnoff, 14 September 1932, file “General Correspondence and Agreements (3 of 3) 1919–1939,” box 570; Winterbottom to Shecklen, 1 October 1932, file “China: Correspondence, 1929–1938 (1 of 6),” box 582; and RCA Vice President and General Attorney William Brown to Winterbottom, 10 October 1932, file “General Correspondence & Traffic Agreements, 1919–1939,” box 570. On ITT’s effort to obstruct the Shanghai station construction, see Attachment to correspondence from McDonough to Scull, 12 March 1930. On ITT’s cutting of its cable rates and RCA’s subsequent financial losses, see memorandum to Harbord and Young, 6 November 1930, file 87.2.126, folder 265, box 126, Owen Young Papers.
 35. Shecklen to Winterbottom, 6 June 1933, file “China: Chinese Arbitration 1933 (7 of 13),” box 581, MCI International Papers.
 36. Shecklen and US District Attorney at Shanghai Dr. George Sellett, “Legality of Sino-Mackey Traffic Agreement: Is China Abandoning her Policy to

- Regain Control of Her Electrical Communications?," draft copy prepared for the *China Weekly Review*, 10 September 1932, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
37. For Winterbottom's quotes about ITT inroads and two Americans companies "thinking of how they can best make love to a foreign administration," see Winterbottom to Sarnoff, 14 September 1932. For Winterbottom's quote about foreign governments seeking "the largest share of revenue," see Winterbottom to Sarnoff, 15 September 1932, file "General Correspondence and Agreements (3 of 3) 1919–1939," box 570, MCI International Papers.
 38. Quoted in Sobel, *ITT*, 50.
 39. Shecklen to Winterbottom, 16 November 1932, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence–July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
 40. Shecklen to the Chinese Minister of Communications, 20 August 1932, and Shecklen to Winterbottom, 21 December 1932, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, 1927–1932 (1 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
 41. Shecklen to Winterbottom, 21 December 1932.
 42. Chen and Huang quotes from "Huang Shao Hsiung [Huang Shaoxiong] Declares Real Status of Mackay Agreement," 22 July 1932, *Shun Pao*, translated copy of article filed in file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, 1927–1932 (1 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
 43. For Chen Mingshu's opposition to Chiang Kai-shek, see Lloyd E. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 85–139, esp. 88–93, 108, 137–9; see also Sun, *China and the Origins of the Pacific War*, 17. For Chen and the radio controversy, see Shecklen to RCA's general foreign representative Samuel Reber, 1 September 1932; Shecklen to Winterbottom, 16 September 1932; "Chen Ming-shu [Chen Mingshu] Again Resigning," 22 October 1932, *China Times* (translation); all documents from file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence–July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
 44. Shecklen to Reber, 1 September 1932.
 45. Shecklen and Sellett, "Legality of Sino-Mackay Traffic Agreement" (underlining contained in the original draft); see also Shecklen to Winterbottom, 18 January 1934; Shecklen to Reber, 1 September 1932.
 46. Shecklen to Reber, 1 September 1932.
 47. "Traffic contracts: draft of memorandum for use as a basis of discussion with Mr. Patrick, general counsel of the Federal Radio Commission," 22 August 1932, file "General Correspondence and Agreements (3 of 3) 1919–1939," box 570, MCI International Papers.
 48. Sobel, *RCA*, 92–121.
 49. Shecklen to Winterbottom, 21 December 1932.
 50. "Nanking Government Cannot Cancel Deal With Mackay Radio for Foreign Service," 1 November 1932, *Japan Advertiser* (Tokyo), copy of article in file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence–July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
 51. Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 149–51, 154; Chu's quote is from 154. For the Nationalists' contemplation of canceling Mackay,

- see Shecklen to Winterbottom, 31 August 1932, and Shecklen to Reber, 1 September 1932, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
52. For the advantages of arbitration for China, see Davis to Sarnoff, 25 January 1933, file "China: Chinese Arbitration, January–May 1933 (10 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers. For Zhu's successfully gaining additional concessions from Mackay, see Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 154.
 53. Chu Chia-hua [Zhu Jiahua] to Shecklen, 22 April 1933, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers
 54. ITT quoted in F.P. Guthrie of the Washington, D.C. office of RCA Communications to RCA Communications Traffic Manager J.B. Rostron, 17 August 1932, file "China: Chinese Arbitration Correspondence–July–November 1932 (4 of 13)," box 581, MCI International Papers.
 55. For RCA's views of Mackay's legality, see Shecklen and Sellett, "Legality of Sino-Mackey Radio Traffic Agreement." For the connection between China and RCA's legal troubles at home see "Traffic contracts: draft memorandum for use as a basis of discussion with Mr. Patrick, general counsel of the Federal Radio Commission," 22 August 1932; see also Davis to Sarnoff, 25 January 1933; Davis to Schuloff, 5 June 1934; and Manton Davis, "Memorandum of legal authorities that allegation is not adjudication and no presumption of illegality arises from a mere unadjudicated charge," 5 June 1934, file "Chinese Arbitration Correspondence, 1928–1934 (3 of 13)," box 581; "Chinese Arbitration: Memorandum of Conference at the Department of Justice," 1 May 1933, file "China: Chinese Arbitration, January–May 1933 (10 of 13)," box 581.
 56. "Decision in the Arbitration Case," 535–6.
 57. "Decision in the Arbitration Case," 538, 544–7.
 58. "Decision in the Arbitration Case," 540, 543–4, 549. On ITT's contract with Japan, see Winterbottom to Sarnoff, 4 May 1934.
 59. "Traffic contracts: draft memorandum for use as a basis of discussion with Mr. Patrick, general counsel of the Federal Radio Commission," 22 August 1932.
 60. For excerpts of Winterbottom's testimony before the FCC (from where the quote is taken), see "Brief of the Intervener, RCA Communications, Inc.," 25–6.
 61. On RCA's declining international business and subsequent withdrawal, see Hugill, *Global Communications Since 1844*, 125.
 62. Sobel, *ITT*, 5–7.
 63. On the road to the Pacific War, see Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*. On the aftermath of the John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). For a more concise treatment of those topics see LaFeber, *The Clash*, 160–213, 257–95.
 64. Anthony Sampson, *The Sovereign State of ITT* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973), esp. 303. Although many writers have identified threats to sovereignty emanating from international communications technologies (some of whom are discussed in the subsequent note), Sampson's argument about ITT's challenge to national sovereignty, it should be noted, is not based on

- any assumptions about the power of the telecommunications technology itself to undermine sovereignty. Sampson's argument about the threat of transnational companies to national sovereignty was based on his analysis of the company's business practices and global strategies that were not, in fact, contingent on international communications. Sampson indeed explicitly recognizes the extent to which communications can strengthen the nation-state while offering a critical evaluation of ITT's relationship with the Soviet Union by the early 1970s. The potential for communications technology transfers to the Soviets particularly galled Sampson. "Watching the conjunction of a superstate with centralized technology – above all a communications technology," Sampson writes, "it is not hard to have some sense of dread at the unfolding prospects of unified planning systems and controlled markets, undisturbed by competition or antitrust." See p. 293.
65. Denis McQuail identified "an increase in transnational and multi-media operations which may weaken national cultural integrity or even political sovereignty" as one of several developments that "have been considered problematic for the rest of society" and "which have provoked a re-examination of normative principles or proposals for reform;" see Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 122. See also Hans Speier, "International Communication: Elite vs. Mass," in *World Politics* 4, no. 3 (1952): 305–17, esp. 307. A more recent articulation of this notion, put forward in the context of a globalization analysis, is in Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: a Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, rev. ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 236–7. Friedman discusses what he calls the "flattening" characteristics of global communications from the telegraph to the Internet. Quoting Harvard Professor Michael J. Sandel, Friedman frames these communications media as being employed in an effort to create "a perfectly efficient, frictionless global market," Friedman then shifts his attention to the nation-state. "The biggest source of friction, of course, has always been the nation-state, with its clearly defined boundaries and laws," Friedman writes. "Are national boundaries a source of friction we should want to preserve, or even can preserve in a flat world?" Friedman asks with an implicit suggestion that any effort to preserve those boundaries might be fruitless in the face of international communications. "[T]he more the flattening forces reduce friction and barriers, the sharper the challenge they will pose to the nation-state and to the particular cultures, values, national identities, democratic traditions, and bonds of restraint that have historically provided some protection and cushioning for workers and communities."
 66. Gregory Nowell's exposition of the transnational structuring concept specifically refers to the multiple outcomes the process can have depending how the various actors interact and use each other. See Nowell, *Mercantile States and the World Oil Cartel*.
 67. For example, see Robert Bedeski, "China's Wartime State," 33–49, and William Kirby "The Chinese War Economy," 185–212, in Hsiung and Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory*. For a broader examination of the ongoing reassessment of the Nationalist era, see Frederic Wakeman, Jr. and Richard Louis Edmonds, eds., *Reappraising Republican China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

3 “By Some It Is Doubted If the Chinese Will Ever Become Radio Fans”: Sino-American Relations and Chinese Broadcasting during the Interwar Era

1. W.A. Estes to Department of State, n.d., received 21 April 1925, 893.74/548, DSNA 1910–29. On the Chinese wireless law see the American Minister in China Jacob Schurman to the Secretary of State Charles Hughes, 13 March 1923, 893.74/284, DSNA 1910–29. See also “Radio Apparatus Contraband,” *North China Daily News*, 3 February 1923, copy filed with Schurman to Hughes, 28 February 1923, 893.74/281, DSNA 1910–29. The 1915 law required special permits for importing or operating radio equipment (primarily radiotelegraphy and radiotelephony equipment). By 1925 the Chinese government at Beijing had yet to adjust the law to accommodate broadcasting, despite foreign appeals to do so.
2. Michael Adas explores this Western mindset in *Machines as the Measure of Men*. Adas makes specific reference to the particular American enthusiasm for this worldview in the aftermath of World War I on 408–9.
3. Avid Scofield to Hughes, 19 April 1922, and Assistant Secretary of State Leland Harrison to Avid Scofield, 17 May 1922, 893.74/237, RG 59, DSNA 1910–29. Since Scofield’s request predated the establishment of China’s first broadcasting station, the missionary apparently wanted to “listen in” for the possibility of hearing distant stations. Michelle Hilmes examines the popularity of this practice in *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 34–74. On the perceptions of irrational opposition to Western technology from non-Westerners, see Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 306.
4. Nicholas R. Clifford, *Spoilt Children of the Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s* (Hanover, NH: Middlebury College Press, 1991), 16–17.
5. The treaty that stipulated the supremacy of a nation’s own radio laws in guiding the radio activities of expatriates was the Nine Power Treaty signed at the Washington Conference of 1921–22. For one American interpretation of how this treaty applied to American radio operators in China, see the American Consul General in Shanghai Edwin Cunningham to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 17 April 1934, 893.76/18, DSNA 1930–39.
6. The popularity of self-assembled sets in the United States is explored in Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting*, 197; and Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 132. Carlton Benson documents this practice in China in “Back to Business as Usual,” 286; see also “Radio Apparatus Contraband,” *North China Daily News*.
7. Kuhn, *Assigned to Adventure*, 313
8. On Shanghai’s development as a foreign-controlled treaty port, see Clifford, *Spoilt Children of the Empire*. Carlton Benson estimates that at least four foreign-owned stations were established between 1923 and 1927 – one British, one Japanese, and two American – and a Chinese-owned station appeared in 1927; “From Teahouse to Radio: Storytelling and the Commercialization of Culture in 1930s Shanghai” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1996), 78–82.

9. The American consulate at Shanghai kept Washington abreast of British Customs Commissioner L.A. Lyall's steps to deal with illicit radios entering the city: see Cunningham to Schurman, 9 March 1925, 893.74/539; Cunningham to Schurman, 24 March 1925, 893.74/549; Schurman to the Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, 10 April 1925, 893.74/545; all from DSNA 1910–29. For Harrison's replies to Estes, see Harrison to W.A. Estes, 21 April 1925 and 25 April 1925, 893.74/548 and 893.74/549, DSNA 1910–29.
10. James Schwoch, *The American Radio Industry and Its Latin American Activities, 1900–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 96–123; Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 102–3.
11. On the number of broadcasting stations, see Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 192; on the number of receivers, see American Minister in China John V.A. MacMurray to Kellogg, 17 February 1926, 893.74/667, DSNA 1910–29.
12. This picture of radio imports and international competition is largely gleaned from the following consular reports: American Consul at Peking [Beijing] Ferdinand Mayer to Kellogg, 1 May 1925, 893.74/573; the American Consul at Tientsin [Tianjin] David Berger, "Radio in the Tientsin District Consular District," 19 June 1925, 893.74/584; American Consul at Darien [Dalian] Leo Sturgeon to Kellogg, 10 August 1925, 893.74/608; American Consul at Harbin George Hanson to Kellogg, forwarding newspaper clipping "Radio Broadcasting Act," in *Harbin Daily News*, 24 September 1926, 893.741/1; American Consul in Charge at Mukden Samuel Sobokin to Kellogg, "Chinese Broadcasting Regulations for Manchuria," 8 November 1926, 893.741/3; Hanson to Kellogg, "Radio Broadcasting Act for North Manchuria," 10 December 1926, 893.741/5; American Consul in Charge at Mukden Samuel Sobokin to Mayer (now serving as chargé d'affaires ad interim at Beijing), 30 December 1926, 893.741/6; Hanson to Kellogg, 29 January 1927, 893.74/744; Mayer (now serving as counselor of the Legation at Beijing) to Kellogg, 23 August 1927, 574.D7/972; the American Consul in Charge at Mukden Myrl Myers, "Broadcasting Station at Mukden," 14 October 1927, 893.74/778; Myers, "Wireless Development in the Three Eastern Provinces," 31 October 1927, 893.74/780; Cunningham, "Broadcasting in Shanghai," 5 March 1928, 893.74/818; and the American Consul in Shanghai Jay C. Huston, "The Radio Situation in Shanghai, China," 23 July 1928, 893.74/853; all preceding documents from DSNA 1910–29.
13. The American Trade Commissioner in Hong Kong Thomas C. Barringer to the BFDC's Electrical Equipment Division, 5 May 1932, file 544, "Radio – China – General, 1919–1928," RG 151, BFDC General Records 1914–58, United States National Archives at College Park, Maryland (hereinafter BFDC General Records 1914–58).
14. For example, see the American Consul at Amoy [Xiamen] John R. Putnam to MacMurray, 23 August 1927, 574.D7/973; the American Consul General at Canton [Guangzhou] Douglas Jenkins to MacMurray, "Radio Stations in the Canton Consular District," 7 August 1928, 893.74/855; the American Consul at Yunnanfu Joseph E. Jacobs to the Mayer (serving as Chargé d'Affaires ad interim), 8 September 1927, 893.741/16; the American Vice Consul in Charge at Yunnanfu Culver B. Chamberlain to Kellogg, 30 April

- 1928, 800.74/81 991h; and Chamberlain to Cunningham, 19 August 1928, 893.74/863; all preceding documents from DSNA 1910–29.
15. Berger, “Radio in the Tientsin [Tianjin] District Consular District,” 19 June 1925.
 16. David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 277–86. For a particular focus on radio, see Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920–1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 14–17; and Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination from Amos ‘n’ Andy to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 2000), 72–8, 128.
 17. Berger, “Radio in the Tientsin [Tianjin] District Consular District,” 19 June 1925. On the connection between leisure time, the home, and broadcasting’s rise in the United States, see Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting*, esp. 301–2.
 18. “One of the big features of the station,” according to a story in the American-owned *China Press*, “is a special receiving set, using fourteen vacuum-tubes, which is being prepared to receive music and voice from the new five kilowatt broadcasting stations now being constructed by the Radio Corporation of America and the Westinghouse Company.” See “Wing On Tower Broadcasting to Start Thursday,” *China Press*, 29 May 1923, clipping enclosed in Schurman to Hughes, 21 June 1923, 893.74/362, DSNA 1910–29.
 19. Cunningham to the Chinese Special Commissioner of Foreign Affairs at Shanghai Hsu [Xu] Yuan, 30 May 1923, 893.74/362, DSNA 1910–29.
 20. Ministry of Communications position quoted in Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Shen Jui-lin [Ruilin] to Schurman, 21 April 1923, 893.74/362, DSNA 1910–29.
 21. Cunningham, “Broadcasting in Shanghai,” 5 March 1928. For Shanghai’s first Chinese-operated broadcasting stations, see Benson, “From Teahouse to Radio,” 81. I was unable to locate estimates of foreign and Chinese receiver ownership for the 1920s to test Cunningham’s assertion.
 22. Cunningham, “Broadcasting in Shanghai,” 5 March 1928. For Cunningham’s disposition, see Helen Foster Snow, *My China Years: A Memoir by Helen Foster Snow* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984), 60, 66, 68 (quote is from page 66); Clifford, *Spoilt Children of the Empire*, 34; Edna Lee Booker, *News is My Job* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 29, 118–19, 235; Hallett Abend, *My Life in China, 1926–1941* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), 136; Stella Dong, *Shanghai 1842–1949: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City* (New York: William Morrow, 2000), 108.
 23. This term refers to the territorial rights on the Liaodong Peninsula that were transferred from Russia to Japan after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5.
 24. At the time of his report, Sturgeon noted that although only one hundred permits had been issued in the territory of more than one million people, the application process had just begun.
 25. Sturgeon, “Radio Broadcasting and the Market for Radio Apparatus in the Kwantung [Guandong] Leased Territory,” special circular no. 269, BFDC’s Electrical Division, 15 July 1924, file 544, “Radio – China – General, 1919–1928,” BFDC General Records 1914–58; Sturgeon to Kellogg, 10 August 1925;

- Sturgeon, "Radio Broadcasting Commences in the Kwantung [Guandong] Leased Territory," special circular no. 445, BFDC's Electrical Division, 21 August 1925, file 544, "Radio – China – General, 1919–1928," BFDC General Records 1914–58. The quote concerning Japanese leadership in broadcasting's development comes from the 21 July 1925 document; others come from the 10 August 1925 document. The prices quoted reflect the prevailing exchange rate, at which one yen brought just over forty-one cents in American dollars, as noted in the 10 August 1925 document.
26. According to Michael Adas, an underlying theme in many commentaries on Japan's rapid development after the late nineteenth century was that "[p]rogressive Japan was a society very different from stagnant China." Matthew Jacobson discusses common American perceptions of China as a backward country stubbornly clinging to premodern traditions, in contrast to Americans' own presumed progressive attributes (including their embrace of technology). See Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 360; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876–1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 36–7, 141.
 27. In the autumn of 1927, France's Société Française des Téléphones Interurbains completed construction on a state-controlled broadcasting station with a daytime range of 1,500 miles and a nighttime range of 3,000 miles. See Myers, "Broadcasting Station at Mukden," 14 October 1927.
 28. Sobokin to Kellogg, "Chinese Broadcasting Regulations for Manchuria," 8 November 1926.
 29. Myers, "Broadcasting Station at Mukden," 14 October 1927.
 30. It was around this time, however, the Zhang Zuolin began to distance himself from Japan, leading to his assassination in 1928; see Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 30.
 31. James Schwoch's examination of American consular reports from Latin America during this period identified a similar promotion of the American broadcasting style; see Schwoch, *The American Radio Industry and Its Latin American Activities*, 96–123. Some reports from China avoided predictions and just described the then-current situation. For the more straightforward reports, see Putnam to MacMurray, 23 August 1927 (regarding Xiamen); Chamberlain to MacMurray, 21 July 1927 (regarding Shantou); Mayer (serving as American Consul in Charge in China) to Kellogg, 13 March 1928, 574.D7/1095, box 5594, DSNA 1910–29 (regarding Beijing); Barringer to the BFDC's Electrical Equipment Division, 5 May 1932 (regarding Hong Kong).
 32. For the query asking Washington's advice on China's various radio laws, see Mayer to Kellogg, 13 March 1928. Washington's response is contained in the Assistant Secretary of State Nelson Johnson to the American Ambassador to Japan Charles MacVeagh, 2 April 1928, 574.D7/1095, box 5594, RG 59, DSNA 1910–29. For Johnson's attitudes about China, see Cohen, *The Chinese Connection*, 172–3; Iriye, *After Imperialism*, 84, 150; James C. Thomson, Jr., *While China Faced West: American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 28.
 33. On the press, see Stephen R. MacKinnon, "Toward a History of the Chinese Press in the Republican Period," *Modern China* 23 (1997): 3–32; Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution*, 24–30. On film, see Zhiwei Xiao, "Constructing a New National Culture: Film Censorship and the Issues of Cantonese

- Dialect, Superstition, and Sex in the Nanjing Decade," in *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922–1943*, ed. Yingjin Zhang (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 183–99. Zhiwei Xiao demonstrates that Nanjing actually enjoyed little success in achieving the unifying goals of this policy because of inherent weaknesses and divisions in the regime. On film and music, see Susan Tuohy, "Metropolitan Sounds: Music and Chinese Films of the 1930s," in Yingjin Zhang, ed., *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai*, 200–21, esp. 206–7. On phonographs and music, see Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); the quote, spoken by Nationalist official and music policy director Xiao Youmei in the early 1930s, is on 51.
34. Xiao Youmei and Nationalist broadcasting standards quoted in Jones, *Yellow Music*, 51 and 118, respectively. For the connection between movies, popular songs, and broadcasting, see Tuohy, 206–7. Music became an instrumental part of the Nationalists' New Life Movement, launched in 1934. The movement sought to transform China by strengthening its people's moral character and militarizing society behind the Nationalist regime along fascist lines. For the connections between the New Life Movement and music, see Jones, 48–52, 113, 117–19. For a more general discussion of the New Life Movement, see Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 356–9. On the use of Mandarin and the 1936 modifications to Nationalist radio regulations, see the American Trade Commissioner in China A. Viola Smith, "Radio Markets – China," 11 March 1937, pp. 6–8, file "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping [Beiping/Beijing]–1937–March," box 124, BFDC Attachés' Reports.
 35. A.V. Smith, "World Radio Markets – China," 15 August 1939, esp. pp. 2, 24–5, file "Foreign Service – Copies of Reports – Peiping – 1939 – July–August," box 128, BFDC Attachés' Reports.
 36. An American trade official cited the ability of American firms to provide replacement parts for their sets more reliably than their competitors as a chief reason for their dominant position in the market. The Japanese actually sold more sets than the Americans, but their low prices (and poor quality) kept the actual value of that trade quite low. See A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets – China," 11 March 1937, 104–5, 111–12.
 37. "Monthly Trade Report, China, Issued at Shanghai," 1 April 1937, folder "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1937–April," box 125, BFDC Attachés' Reports. By the eve of the war with Japan, the Central Electrical Manufacturing Works had established itself as a key Nationalist economic initiative. But when the war began Japan destroyed it, along with most of China's burgeoning industrial infrastructure. See Kirby, "The Chinese War Economy," 185–212, esp. 194. See also A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets – China," 19 May 1938, file "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1938–May," box 126, BFDC Attachés' Reports.
 38. Government involvement in broadcasting was not simply about increasing the number of stations. The Ministry of Communications also imposed order on the airwaves by reducing Shanghai's stations from fifty-seven in 1933 to thirty-seven on the eve of the war with Japan. See the American Consul in Nanking [Nanjing] Willys R. Peck to the Secretary of State Henry Stimson, 13 February 1933, 893.74/972, DSN 1930–39.

39. On popular programming, see Benson, "From Teahouse to Radio," 73–140. Benson relates several illuminating anecdotes (e.g., listeners heard one broadcaster, working out of his home, invite a performing storyteller to join him on the bed to smoke opium, and another urinate in a chamber pot); see page 85. For more on "hybrid" programs (Benson's term), see A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937, 10. According to this report, other popular Chinese programs included comedy acts composed of two musicians and three singers and five-person novelty groups consisting of two storytellers, two musicians, and one singer.
40. A.V. Smith, "Radio News," 5 September 1935, file "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1935– August–September," box 120, BFDC Attachés' Reports, 2; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937, 73–88; A.V. Smith, "World Radio Markets–China", 15 August 1939, 8–15.
41. The American Assistant Trade Commissioner at Shanghai Edgar W. O'Harow, "The Shanghai Market for Radio Receiving Sets, Parts, and Equipment," 4 January 1933, pp. 10–11, file "Shanghai – Special Reports – January 1933," box 117, BFDC Attachés' Reports; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets – China," 11 March 1937, 73–5. Broadcasting's expansion continued after the Communists ousted the Nationalists from power in 1949. Over the next three decades the key components of rural Chinese broadcasting became locally based and government-controlled wired networks, public broadcasts that reduced the need for personal receivers and electrified homes, and shortwave transmissions that surmounted geographic obstacles like mountains. See Yuezhi Zhao, *Media, Market, and Democracy: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 16–17; Fitzgerald, *Awakening China*, 119; Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (New York: Columbia University, 1985), 151–71.
42. Charles Crane to President Franklin Roosevelt, 31 December 1936, folder "PPF 462 – Crane, Charles R.," President's Personal File, Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; "Annual Report of Trade and Industry for 1934, Shanghai, China," 30 January 1935, folder "Foreign Service–Copies Of Reports–Peiping–January 1935," box 119, BFDC Attachés' Reports; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937, 73; Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 194. Observations such as these contradict Leland Harrison's 1922 assumptions that Chinese peasants would instinctively resist radio, as well as the consular dismissals of Chinese broadcasting's future that came soon thereafter.
43. See Baark, *Lightning Wires*; Zhang, "The Transfer of Network Technologies to China, 1860–1898," 84–129.
44. Following the Washington Conference of 1921–22, Chinese delegations strongly opposed foreign disregard for Chinese radio laws. Their objections were written into a succession of international communications treaties. However, as chapter one documented, in the absence of a strong central government to support these objections they carried little practical weight. See the Director of China's Bureau of International Telegraphs Wen Yu-Ch'ing [Wen Youqing] to Cunningham, 24 May 1935, 893.76/30, DSNA 1930–39. See also Keith Clark, *International Communications: The American Attitude* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 194.

45. Benson, "From Teahouse to Radio." For programming and studio information, see 84–6. The emphasis on promoting native goods over foreign products is addressed in chap. 3, "Consumers Are Also Soldiers," 141–211. The subject of patriotic radio is addressed in Benson's "Back to Business as Usual." Listener protests of advertisements for foreign products are discussed in Benson's "From Teahouse to Radio," 134 (including direct quote). Overall, Benson depicts the Shanghai radio audience as highly engaged with the new entertainment medium.
46. On Chiang's loss of nationalist support while trying to navigate the challenges of confronting Japan and leading a regime with inherent flaws in its construction, see So Wai Chor, "The Making of the Guomindang's Japan Policy, 1932–1937," *Modern China* 28 (2002): 213–52; Xiaoqun Xu, "National Salvation and Cultural Reconstruction: Shanghai Professors' Responses to the National Crisis in the 1930s," in Wei and Liu, eds., *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective*, 53–74; Tien-wei Wu, "The Chinese Communist Movement," in Hsiung and Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory*, 79–106; Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962); and Tien-wei Wu, *The Sian Incident* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976). In recent years, some historians have maintained that Chiang's logic of avoiding direct confrontation with Japan was sound in terms of his assessment of China's chances against Japan. Works by Robert Bedeski and William Kirby, for example, support this interpretation. However, Frederic Wakeman argues that fundamental flaws in the regime itself would have compromised the ability of the Nationalists to rule over China for the long-term regardless of the war against Japan. See Robert Bedeski, "China's Wartime State;" Kirby, "The Chinese War Economy;" and Wakeman, *Policing Shanghai*, esp. xvi.
47. On extending the authority of China in general and the Ministry of Communications in particular over radio, see Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 149–51 (quote is from 151); also see A.V. Smith, "Telecommunications – China," special report no. S-11, 23 July 1937, box 123, BFDC Attachés' Reports. On intra-party rivalries, see Frederic Wakeman Jr., "A Revisionist View of the Nanjing Decade: Confucian Fascism," in Wakeman and Edmonds, eds., *Reappraising Republican China*, 141–78, esp. 150; see also T'ien-wei Wu, "Contending Political Forces during the War of Resistance." Donald Jordan's *Chinese Boycotts Versus Japanese Bombs* offers an excellent analysis of how intra-party rivalries in 1931–32 compounded problems with Japan; see esp. chap. 2 and chap. 14. On efforts to minimize Communist and warlord power, see William Wei, *Counterrevolution in China: The Nationalists in Jiangxi During the Soviet Period* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985). For the 1932 Sino-Japanese War at Shanghai and its relationship to the takeover of Manchuria, see Donald A. Jordan, *China's Trial By Fire: The Shanghai War of 1932* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).
48. Philip T. Rosen, *The Modern Stentors: Radio Broadcasting and the Federal Government, 1920–1934* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 121–3. For an examination of how developments in American broadcasting (in particular the dynamics between amateur operators, commercial interests,

- and the government) contributed to particular frequency allocations and regulatory guidelines, see Hilmes, *Radio Voices*, 38–51, esp. 49 for the licensing and programming distinctions applied to “amateurs” and “commercial broadcasters.” Also see Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting*, 292–303.
49. On Stanton’s position, see Johnson (serving as American Minister to China since 1929) to Hull, 22 March 1934, 893.76/20, DSNA 1930–39.
 50. Johnson to Hull, 22 March 1934. The State Department’s support of Johnson is filed under the same decimal number, 893.76/20, and dated 3 May 1934. For Johnson’s low regard of the Nationalists, see Cohen, *America’s Response to China*, 103; for a broader look at the Johnson’s approach to foreign policy, see Herbert J. Wood, “Nelson Trussler Johnson: The Diplomacy of Benevolent Pragmatism,” in *Diplomats in Crisis: United States-Chinese-Japanese Relations, 1919–1941*, ed. Richard Dean Burns and Edward M. Bennett (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Press, Inc., 1974), 16.
 51. On Hankou and the overall percentage of foreign concessions returned to Chinese control, see William Kirby, “The Internationalization of China,” in Wakeman and Edmonds, eds., *Reappraising Republican China*, 186–7; for a more detailed look at the Hankou concession’s return to Chinese control, see C. Martin Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923–1928* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 73–7. For the particulars of Mueller’s situation, see Johnson to the American Consul General in Hankow [Hankou] Edwin Stanton, 4 August 1934, 893.76/28, and Counselor of the American Legation Clarence Gauss to Hull, 3 October 1934, 893.76/29, both in DSNA 1930–39.
 52. For Johnson’s diplomatic maneuvering see Johnson to Hull, 21 June 1935, 893.76/30, DSNA 1930–39 and Johnson to Stanton, 4 August 1934 (Johnson’s quotes are from the 21 June 1935 correspondence). Johnson even tried to retaliate against China by having the FCC threaten to harass Chinese radio operators in the United States; see the memorandum of a conversation between the State Department’s Treaty Division representative Harvey Otterman and the Acting Chief of the International Section of the FCC B.J. Shimeall, 9 October 1936, 893.76/35, DSNA 1930–39. For some of the other amateur radio conflicts involving Johnson, see Wen to Cunningham, 24 May 1935; Johnson to Hull, 25 May 1936, 893.76/35; Cunningham to Johnson, 8 June 1935, 893.76/30; all from DSNA 1930–39. Zhu’s quote is from Chu, *China’s Postal and Other Communications Services*, 194–5.
 53. French and Japanese diplomats expressed reservations about the Chinese position, but the British took the same official stance as the Americans (Johnson’s freelancing notwithstanding). See Leslie Bennett Tribolet, *The International Aspects of Electrical Communications in the Pacific Area* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929), 132–5.
 54. See A.V. Smith, “Radio Markets – China,” 11 March 1937.
 55. Cunningham to Johnson, n.d. (probably spring 1934), 893.76/22, DSNA 1930–39. The Chinese licensing law was similar to the licensing procedures in effect in Britain, which perhaps explains the lack of official British concern. For Johnson’s position, see Johnson to Hull, 22 March 1934.
 56. The International Settlement’s residents elected Shanghai Municipal Council members, who generally were connected to prominent commercial interests within Shanghai. The number of council members ranged from

- nine in the early 1920s to fourteen by the end of that decade, when representation was settled at five British, five Chinese, two American, and two Japanese. See Clifford, *Spoilt Children of the Empire*, 21–2; Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Shanghai Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime, 1937–1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 182, n. 44; Dong, *Shanghai 1842–1949*, 83–4, 181–2; Eileen P. Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844–1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 166.
57. The development of the Shanghai Municipal Council's (SMC) position on radio can be followed in files U001-04-0002812 and U001-04-0002813, both titled "Transmission Electrical Messages: Radio Broadcasting and Receiving Stations – Control," SMC Records. In file U001-04-0002812, see esp. the deputy secretary of the SMC to the Commissioner of the Shanghai Municipal Police Kenneth W. Bourne, 5 May 1927, file page 13; memorandum of a meeting with RCA's China Representative George Shecklen and Sales Manager of the Philco Sales Corporation Mr. E.A.L. Best, 10 December 1932, 176; untitled document stating the SMC's position on enforcing Chinese radio regulations, 12 June 1933, 137; Secretary of the Shanghai Foreign Residents Association J.M. Tavares to the Secretary of the SMC J.R. Jones, 14 March 1934, 92; Secretary General of the SMC Sterling Fessenden to Tavares, 20 March 1934, 90. In file U001-04-0002813, Jones to the Secretary of the Kulangsu [Gulangsu] Municipal Council G.R. Bass, 17 April 1934, file page 119; Secretary of the SMC G. Godfrey Philips to Gauss on the subject of "Regulations Governing the Operation and Maintenance of Communications," 9 May 1937, 95–7. Quotes are from the untitled document dated 12 June 1933.
 58. Untitled document stating the SMC's position on enforcing Chinese radio regulations, 12 June 1933, p. 137, file U001-04-0002812, SMC Records.
 59. "Activities of the Shanghai Telegraphs Office of the Ministry of Communications Regarding Suspected Installation of a Wireless Transmitting Set at 119 Baikal Road," Special Branch report, 9 October 1935, pp. 37–9, file U001-04-0002813, SMC Records.
 60. Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 195. For stations registered in 1934, see Benson, "From Teahouse to Radio" (n. 9 above), 83. For stations registered in 1937, see Leo Oufan Lee and Andrew Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture: Journalism and Fiction in the Late Ch'ing and Beyond," in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, Andrew Nathan, and Evelyn Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 374–5.
 61. *Shanghai Calling*, 26 April 1934, p. 88, file U001-04-0002812, SMC Records.
 62. Handwritten note by Jones, concerning the difficulties of enacting radio regulation, n.d. but written before 28 March 1934, p. 122, file U001-04-0002813, SMC Records.
 63. James Lafayette Hutchison, *China Hand* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1936), 377–8.
 64. The Chairman of the Shanghai Municipal Council H.E. Arnhold to the Chairman of the British Municipal Council at Tientsin [Tianjin] E.C. Peters, 17 January 1936, p. 101, file U001-04-0002813, SMC Records.

65. Studies of Nationalist efforts to control mass media often emphasize how limited Nationalist control actually was in the face of the deep domestic political divisions and lingering warlord power bases that remained after the Northern Expedition. On the press, see MacKinnon, "Toward a History of the Chinese Press;" on music, see Jones, *Yellow Music*; on film, see Xiao, "Constructing a New National Culture."
66. For the British and American stations' disposition toward Nationalist radio regulations, see A.V. Smith "Radio Markets – China," 11 March 1937, 8; French and Japanese stations were also reported to have ignored the Nationalist regulations regarding retransmission of official broadcasts. For an account of the American station forced out of business, see A.V. Smith, "Radio Developments in China," special report number S-2, 7 July 1937, box 125, BFDC Attachés' Reports.
67. On American efforts to promote their own developmental models, see Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*. For a more particular focus on China, see T. Christopher Jespersen, *American Images of China, 1931–1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Hunt, *Making of a Special Relationship*; Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door*; Reed, *The Missionary Mind*. Jonathan D. Spence addresses this theme and notes its application to Westerners in his book, *To Change China*. The studies cited above also address the tendency to look past rising Chinese nationalism. Studies by Iriye's *After Imperialism*, esp. 87, and Waldron's *From War to Nationalism*, esp. 172, highlight the poor responses to rising Chinese nationalism as critical factors in the demise of the so-called Washington System of international cooperation for East Asia during the mid-1920s. For the return of concessions, see Kirby, "The Internationalization of China," 187.

4 "As If We Lived on Maine St. in Kansas, USA": Shortwave Broadcasting and American Mass Media in Wartime China

1. American Trade Commissioner in Shanghai A. Viola Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 21 February 1939, file 544, "Radio-China-1939," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58.
2. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso Press, 1991). Since the publication of Anderson's original analysis, the notion of the "imagined community" has informed many subsequent analyses, including: Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Yongming Zhou, *Historicizing Online Politics: Telegraphy, the Internet, and Political Participation in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2006); Monroe E. Price, *Television, the Public Sphere, and National Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Elihu Katz, "Deliver Us From Segmentation," in *A Communications Cornucopia: Markle Foundation Essays on Information Policy*, ed. Roger G. Noll and Monroe E. Price (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1998), 99–112. For two examples of radio histories that have been informed by Anderson, see Hilmes, *Radio Voices* and Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation, Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920–1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000).

3. On the unique oral attributes of radio and its engagement of the human mind, see Douglas, *Listening In*, 4–8, 12, 22–36 (esp. 26–7). See also Edward D. Miller, *Emergency Broadcasting and 1930s American Radio* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 7–10 and John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 214–17. Direct quotes are from Douglas, *Listening In*, 23–4.
4. Direct quote is reprinted in Peters, *Speaking into the Air*, 215.
5. A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 20 September 1935, file 544, "China–Radio–1929–36," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58. Background information on Viola Smith and her career in the Commerce Department's foreign service can be found in "U.S. Woman Aide at Shanghai Cited," in *New York Times*, 18 October 1937, 19. See also Assistant Director of the BFDC O.P. Hopkins to Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover's assistant Lawrence Richey, 17 January 1928, and Richey to Clara Burdette, 19 January 1928; both letters in folder "Smith, A.B.–Alber W; 1922–1927," box 562, Hoover Commerce Papers.
6. For the growth of commercialized national network broadcasting that primarily appealed to a white middle class, see Susan Smulyan, *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920–1934* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994). For the potential unifying effects of broadcasting through the transmission of shared cultural symbols, see Hilmes, *Radio Voices*, 1–33. However, it is also important to recognize that national broadcasting can both unify and marginalize at the same time; groups farther removed from and less invested in those dominant symbols and values can be further marginalized, isolated, and antagonized by the so-called mainstream programming that saturated the airwaves. On national broadcasting's divisive tendencies, see Craig, *Fireside Politics*, esp. 281; Randall Patnode, "'What These People Need is Radio': New Technology, the Press, and Otherness in America," in *Technology and Culture* 44, no. 2 (April 2003): 285–305. For a reference to a comparable divisive process occurring in early Mexican broadcasting, see Hayes, *Radio Nation*, 7.
7. On the overall development of international shortwave broadcasting through the mid-1930s, see Fejes, *Imperialism, Media, and the Good Neighbor: New Deal Foreign Policy and United States Shortwave Broadcasting to Latin America*, (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1986), 54–60; see also Jerome S. Berg, *On the Short Waves, 1923–1945: Broadcast Listening in the Pioneer Days of Radio* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1999), 47–57, esp. 56–57. On Smith's desire for a west coast station to fill the broadcasting void to Asia, see A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 20 September 1935.
8. For Americans and other foreign communities in Shanghai, see Clifford, *Spoilt Children of the Empire*, 42; and James Huskey, "The Cosmopolitan Connection: Americans and Chinese in Shanghai during the Interwar Years," in *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 3 (1987): 228. On missionaries, see John K. Fairbank, ed. *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Reed, *The Missionary Mind in American-East Asian Policy*; and Patricia Neils, ed., *United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China: The Impact of American Missionaries* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990). The estimated American population in Shanghai comes from A.V. Smith,

- "Radio Markets–China," p. 30, 11 March 1937, file "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1937–March," box 124, BFDC Attachés' Reports.
9. My use of the term "expatriate" might strike some as problematic. In the early twentieth century, an American identified as an "expatriate" might have been suspected of having loosened their loyalties and patriotism toward the United States, and had their commitment to their American citizenship questioned. In the context of this chapter's argument, I certainly do not intend my use of this term to carry any such implication. I am primarily using it as shorthand for American citizens who have chosen to live abroad while remaining unquestionably American. My use of the term, in fact, is closer to the more recent understanding of an "expat" who enjoys a privileged status in a foreign land without any questions being raised about an individual's commitment to their national citizenship. See Nancy Green, "Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 307–28, esp. 32–3.
 10. Smith's personnel file contains effusive praise about her abilities as trade commissioner; see "Biographies" file, volume 8 (Ricardo Giceta Sabella–Edward A. Symms), box 5, Records Relating to the History and Personnel of the Foreign Commerce Service, 1914–39, BFDC General Records 1914–58. The correspondence between Hopkins and Richey cited in n. 5 above comments (albeit not very sympathetically) on the gender discrimination Smith experienced as a pioneering woman in a male-dominated profession. For a more thorough examination of gender issues that impacted Smith's career, see Epstein, "International Feminism and Empire-Building Between the Wars," 699–719; Alexandra Epstein, "Linking a State to the World: Female Internationalists, California, and the Pacific, 1919–1939" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Santa Barbara, 2003), 154–217; For Smith's reporting on shortwave reception in Shanghai, see A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 20 September 1935; A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 11 January 1938, file 544, "Radio-China-General, 1937–38, box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937 p. 30; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," May 1938, pp. 15–16, 19 file "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping –1938–May," box 126, BFDC Attachés' Reports.
 11. See Elizabeth Rue to My Dear Girls, 9 February 1937, file 2, box 173, Margaret Mary Rue and Elizabeth Rue Hembold Papers, RG 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library Special Collections, New Haven, Connecticut.
 12. On the sale of American products and the potentially significant Chinese audience, see A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937, 31. On receiver sales, A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 20 September 1935. Direct quote is from 11 March 1937 report.
 13. A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 20 September 1935; A.V. Smith to the National Foreign Trade Association, 18 July 1936, file 544, "Radio–China–1929–1936," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58; A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 2 August 1937, file 544, "Radio-China-General, 1937–38," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58.
 14. For popular American views of radio's cultural and geographic unifying potential, see Smulyan, *Selling Radio*, 31–6; on American cosmopolitanism

- in Shanghai, see Huskey, "The Cosmopolitan Connection." For the persisting parochialism in the American community, see Mark F. Wilkenon, "The Shanghai American Community, 1937–1949," in Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot, eds., *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842–1953* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 231–49. Edgar Snow is quoted in Dong, *Shanghai 1842–1849*, 224.
15. For the application, see Examiner's Report No. I-462, in regard to the application of General Electric Company, 30 June 1937, file 89-6 (General Electric), box 365, FCC Records 1927–46. For reference to complaints from Americans abroad concerning reception of US international broadcasts, see Secretary of the Federal Communications Commission T.J. Slowie to Mr. Newton Underwood, 21 September 1937, file 89-6 (General Electric), Box 365, FCC Records 1927–46. On the decision to grant the license to General Electric, see Decision of the Federal Communications Commission in the Matter of General Electric Company, Belmont, California, For Construction Permit, Docket No. 4467, submitted 4 August 1937, decided 9 November 1937, file 89-6 (General Electric), box 365, RG 173, FCC Records 1927–46. On FCC changes to shortwave regulations and the increase in international advertising, see Berg, *On the Shortwaves*, 56–7.
 16. A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 21 February 1939, file 544, "Radio–China–1939," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58; "U.S. Pacific Coast Radio Broadcasts Inaugurated," *China Weekly Review*, 18 February 1939, 360. A similar request for listeners to send their feedback to Viola Smith was also published in a *China Press* article that ran almost a week later; see "W6XBE–KGEI Radio Programs May Resume Today," in *China Press*, 26 February 1939, 3.
 17. On the station's reach, see "W6XBE–KGEI Radio Programs May Resume Today," in *China Press*, 26 February 1939, 3. Quote concerning the "mediocre" quality of programming from American Trade Commissioner in Shanghai (Smith) to the electrical division, BFDC, "Treasure Island Station W6XBE," 30 March 1939, file 544, "Radio–China–1939," box 2478, RG 151, BFDC 1914–58. Quote criticizing "swing" music and other "insipid musical numbers" from A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 3 May 1939, file 544, "Radio-China-General, 1939," box 2479, BFDC 1914–58. On communications and notions of simultaneity, see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), esp. 314–15, 318 (quote is from 318).
 18. A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, "Treasure Island Station W6XBE," 30 March 1939. The underlining of "American" was contained in the original document. For the reformist ideals that Smith echoed, see Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), esp. 266–329.
 19. A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 3 May 1939.
 20. In 1930, ownership of the *China Press* passed to a Chinese syndicate (Hollington Tong, later an official for Chiang Kai-Shek's government, was the editor at one point) but it retained its American registration and character, as well as a strong focus on American news. During the 1930s the paper did allow for more detailed coverage of local events to compliment its American focus, which also interested its readers who lived in Shanghai. For the "nationality" of the newspapers, see Thomas Ming-Heng Chao, *The*

Foreign Press in China (Shanghai: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1931), 64–88, esp. 69–70; and Hollington K. Tong, *China and the World Press* (Nanjing: publisher not identified, 1948), 9–10, 24. For the U.S. relations with Franco's Spain, see "Recognition of Franco to Wait, Welles Says," in *China Press*, 19 February 1939, 1. For some of the many examples of reprinted American political cartoons, see the two *Chicago Tribune* cartoons, one *Chicago Daily News* cartoon, and a Herblock cartoon addressing the tense state of international relations in 1939, reprinted in the *China Weekly Review*, 11 February 1939, 325–6. Reference to an annual ball held in Shanghai to honor of George Washington's birthday is found in the *China Weekly Review*, 22 February 1936, 430 (the article cited complications that led to the cancellation of that particular year's ball). A commemoration for the July Fourth holiday is covered in the *China Weekly Review*, 10 July 1937, 214. Any December issue of the *China Weekly Review* will provide a host of references to the upcoming Christmas holiday; for a specific reference to Christmas that speaks to the particular idea of an American media milieu, see "Christmas Prosperity in the United States: 5000 Extra Men Employed to Handle Mail," in the *China Weekly Review*, 2 January 1937, 170. In the 24 February 1939 edition of the *China Press*, the comics can be found on page 7; in addition to the cartoons noted above, the *China Press* also carried "Wash Tubbs," "Freckles and His Friends," "Boots and Her Buddies," and "Alley Oop" in its comics section. The article discussing the possibility of a Chicago Cubs World Series championship can be found in the *China Press*, 9 March 1939, 4.

21. Percentages of English-language and American movies from Lowenthal, "Public Communications in China, before July, 1937," 48–9. Advertisements for the specific movies listed are found in the *China Press*, 19 February 1939, 5. The "Young at Heart" advertising appears in the *China Press*, 1 March 1939, 12–13.
22. The Zenith, Champion and Snow White Powder ads appear in the 18 February 1939 edition of the *China Press*; the Ovaltine (then marketed as "Ovalmaltine"), Coca Cola, and Daggett & Ramsdell ads appeared in the 19 February 1939 edition of the *China Press*. When the Ford ad appeared on the back cover of the 15 February 1936 edition of the *China Press*, that same month a Ford ad with comparable claims ran in major US publications, including the 24 February 1936 edition of *Time* magazine. The *Time* ad touted the vehicle's "high quality and modern design" and its "ease of control;" overall it promised to be "better in power, acceleration, smoothness, and all-round motoring satisfaction." For a discussion of the era's auto advertisements placed in their wider historical context, see Merrit Roe Smith, "Technological Determinism in American Culture," 19–21.
23. For the Shanghai Telephone ad, see the *China Press*, 23 February 1939, 3; for Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, see the *China Weekly Review*, 11 January 1936, 213; for Baby's Own Tablets ad, see the *China Weekly Review*, 22 February 1936, 461.
24. For the Shanghai Gas Company ads, see the *China Press*, 22 February 1939, 2 and the *China Press*, 28 February 1939, 2. To consider these ads in the context of their counterparts in the US-based publications, see Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); for a discussion on how the ads of this era reflected the idealized white American social world,

- see Elspeth H. Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884–1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 168–9.
25. For international telegraphy, see Daniel Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850–1940*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 97–144; Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon*, 11–115; Jill Hills, *The Struggle For Control of Global Communication: The Formative Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 1–92; Hugill *Global Communications since 1844*, 1–52. On shipping, see Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, esp. 18–48. For the development of China's rail and telegraphy networks, see Zhang, "The Transfer of Network Technologies to China, 1860–1898;" Baark, *Lightning Wires*. For the relationship between expanding telegraphic networks and the US diplomatic service's closer ties to Washington, see David Paul Nickles, *Under the Wire: How the Telegraph Changed Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). For international mail, see Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, 20–1, 37; Daniel Headrick, *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 181–93; F.H. Williamson, "The International Postal Service and the Universal Postal Union," in *The Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 9, no. 1 (January 1930): 68–78, esp. 68–71; Paul Reinsch, "International Unions and their Administration," in *The American Journal of International Law* 1: 3 (July 1907), 579–623, esp. 581, 586–8; "Unveiling the Monument Commemorating the Founding of the Universal Postal Union," in *The American Journal of International Law* 4: 1 (January 1910), 185–6. For the development of the American postal system and its relationship to American identity, see John, *Spreading the News*, esp. 13, 29, 158, 161. For the expansion of China's domestic postal network, see Chu, *China's Postal and Other Communications Services*, 27.
 26. As Hamid Naficy argued with an eye on the more contemporary global reach of American media, "[t]he globalization of American pop culture does not automatically translate into globalization of American control." People exposed to American media "may think with American cultural products but they do not think American." See Hamid Naficy, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 2.
 27. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*.
 28. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*.
 29. NBC Vice President Frank Mason to the Chief of the BFDC's Electrical Division John Payne, 18 April 1939, file 544, "Radio-China-General, 1939," box 2479, BFDC General Records 1914–58.
 30. On entertainment programming, see A.V. Smith, "Shortwave Broadcasts from the United States: Shanghai Reception of KGEL," 11 March 1941, 894.74/274, DSN 1940–44; on presidential broadcasts, see A.V. Smith, "Shortwave Broadcasting from the United States: Shanghai Reception Of KGEL," 18 March 1941, 894.74/273, DSN 1940–44. For Smith's appraisal of W6XBE at the end of 1939, see A.V. Smith, "World Radio Markets–China," 15 August 1939, file "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1939–July–August," box 128, RG 151, BFDC Attachés' Reports.

31. "American Broadcast," letter to the editor, *China Weekly Review*, 25 February 1939, 381. For the later editorials, see "Treasure Island News Reports Should Be Rebroadcast Here," *China Weekly Review*, 29 May, 1939, 362; "The Shanghai Broadcasting Situation and Future Prospects," *China Weekly Review*, 24 June 1939, 99.
32. M. Morgan to KGEI (W6XBE), n.d., contained in a group of letters forwarded by Assistant to the Manager of Broadcasting for General Electric (Gibson) to the assistant secretary of state (Long), Department of State, 25 June 1940, 894.74/254, DSNA 1940-44 (letters forwarded in this group hereinafter referred to as W6XBE-KGEI 1940 Letters, 894.74/254, DSNA 1940-44); Reverend Vincent Morrison to General Electric, Treasure Island, 23 April 1940, W6XBE-KGEI 1940 Letters, 894.74/254, DSNA 1940-44; Reverend W.M. Burnside to W6XBE, 15 April 1939, contained in a group of letters forwarded by station manager E.T.B. Harris to Commander F.W. Connor, 7 July 1939, in turn forwarded by Connor to the Department of State, 894.74/182, DSNA 1930-39 (letters forwarded in this group hereinafter referred to as W6XBE-KGEI 1939 Letters, 894.74/182, DSNA 1930-39). W6XBE changed its call letters to KGEI in 1940, which is why the call letters KGEI are used to identify W6XBE Morgan's letter.
33. E.G. Goldsborough to W6XBE, 16 April 1939, W6XBE-KGEI 1939 Letters, 894.74/182, DSNA 1930-39.
34. Historian Reinhold Wagnleitner refers to Latin America during this period as the "laboratory" in which US government and corporate interests began coordinating on the development of media strategies and methods to influence foreign peoples with American cultural ideals, strategies later used more broadly in the Cold War. Fred Fejes comments, however, that US-Latin American relations remained "very rocky" despite this cultural diplomacy. Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War*, translated by Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 51; Fejes, *Imperialism, Media, and the Good Neighbor*, esp. 63-114 (quote is from 109).
35. Adele Williams (signed as Mrs. Frank S. Williams) to W6XBE, date illegible, W6XBE-KGEI 1939 Letters, 894.74/182, DSNA 1930-39.
36. For her first radio purchase and subsequent poor reception, see Velva Brown to Frances Clausen, 17 September 1936, file 13, box 31, Velva Brown Papers, RG 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter Velva Brown Papers); on four radios in the compound, see Brown to Clausen, 30 October 1938, file 15, box 31, Velva Brown Papers; for persisting complaints about US reception, see Brown to Clausen, 25 September 1938, file 15, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
37. On the social gospel as implemented in China and the United States, see Jun Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China, 1919-1937*. (Cranberry, NJ: Lehigh University Press, 1996), especially chap. 1 ("The Social Gospel and the YMCA in the United States") and chap. 2 ("The Social Gospel and the YMCA in China"). For a brief overview of the application of the social gospel in the American context, see George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, brief 7th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 609-11.

38. For Japan's foreign policies that drove the expansion into China and wider East Asia, see Barnhart, *Japan and the World*, esp. 1–115. Donald Jordan is the author of a trilogy of books that explores Chiang Kai-Shek's rise to and consolidation of power between 1926 and 1932 against the backdrop of domestic challenges and Japanese imperialism: see Jordan, *The Northern Expedition*; Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs*; Jordan, *China's Trial By Fire*. For an analysis of how the conflict between Chinese nationalism and Japanese imperialism between 1931 and 1937 ultimately led to the Sino-Japanese War, see Coble, *Facing Japan*; Chiang Kai-shek's kidnapping and near assassination, known as the X'ian [Sian] Incident is addressed in detail on 334–74. For the disaster of China's attempt to fight Japan after the outbreak of war in 1937 and its subsequent impact on China's approach to fighting the war, see John Garver, "China's Wartime Diplomacy," 6–7, and Marvin Williamsen, "The Military Dimension, 1937–1941," in Hsiung and Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory*, 142–7.
39. For the effects of the war on Shantou, see Hsu Long-hsuen and Chang Ming-kai, *History of The Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*, 2nd ed., trans. Wen Ha-hsiung (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing, 1971) 492–3. From the outskirts of the city, Velva Brown commented on the bombings that followed the outset of the war and the impact it had on Shantou "People are beginning to trickle back... so I am told," she wrote. "I have not had time to go over to the city and see myself.... As a matter of fact the four days of shelling and bombing in Swatow [Shantou] did considerable damage;" see Brown to the Folks at Home, 4 October 1937, file 14, box 31, Velva Brown Papers. Brown's comments on the challenges of scavenging for food are from Brown to the Folks at Home, 6 August 1941, and the quote is from Brown to Friends at Home, 18 February 1941; both letters in file 18, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
40. Brown to Clausen, 21 May 1937, file 14, and Brown to Clausen, 20 November 1938, file 15; both letters in box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
41. Brown to unknown recipient (first page is missing), 11 April 1939, file 16, box 31, Velva Brown Papers. This letter is actually undated. Based on where the letter was filed, Velva Brown's reference to listing to an Easter broadcast "last night" in a year where the holiday fell on April 9, and the date and time change between China and the US, Brown was likely writing this letter on 11 April 1939.
42. For Brown's entrenchment in an American media and communications milieu via international mail before W6XBE–KGEI's establishment, see the following letters Velva Brown wrote to her friend Frances Clausen that are archived in box 31 of the Velva Brown Papers: 30 October 1937, file 14; 23 August 1938, 13 October 1938, 7 November 1938, and 20 November 1938, file 15; 23 September 1940, file 17. See also Brown to Inger, 30 June 1931, file 8, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
43. Brown to Clausen, 20 January 1938, file 15, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
44. Letter from Brown (first page missing), 11 April 1939.
45. Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 53–82, esp. 54, 72, 73, and 81.
46. Brown to Clausen, 21 October 1940, file 17, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.

47. Brown to Clausen, 23 September 1940, file 17, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
48. Brown to Clausen, 7 March 1941, file 18, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
49. Russell's personal reflections on radio are recorded in her "Daybook, 1937–1950" (two folders), box 47, Maud Russell Papers, Special Collections, New York Public Library (hereinafter Maud Russell Papers). Several entries from 1939 and 1940 note her penchant for listening to the radio, as well as inviting people over to join her in doing so. She was particularly busy hosting guests between 3 June and 13 June 1940. It is the entry from 22 February 1940 that specifically mentions her order of the Pilot radio. The entry from 26 April 1940 comments on hearing Franklin Roosevelt's Pan American speech. For the letter she sent directly to the station, see Maud Russell to Station KGEL, 9 May 1940, W6XBE–KGEL 1940 Letters, 894.74/254, DSN 1940–44.
50. For biographical information on Russell, see Karen Garner, "The 'Chinese Connection' to American Radicalism," in *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 127–53; and Garner, *Precious Fire*. Quote regarding station reception is from Maud Russell to Station KGEL, 9 May 1940.
51. For Russell's reading of the *China Weekly Review*, originally named *Millard's Review*, see Garner, *Precious Fire*, 34. On the change of name for that publication, see Chao, *Foreign Press in China*, 75–6. The remaining information comes from the Maud Russell Papers: for her record listening habits, see "Records–Victor," undated, file "Letters 1919," box 1; for Russell's reaction to American movies being shown in China, see Russell to Asilomar Division, 25 November 1929, file "Correspondence, 1929," box 3; for the inoperable radio, see Maud Russell to Lil, 15 December 1938, file "Correspondence, 1938," box 3; for the purchase of a new radio, see the entry from 22 February 1940, "Daybook, 1937–1950" (two folders), box 47.
52. Russell to Gertrude and All of You, 28 November 1940, and Russell to Gertrude and All of You, 8 December 1940, file "Correspondence, 1940," box 3, Maud Russell Papers.
53. Russell to Folks, 10 November 1940, file "Correspondence, 1940," box 3, Maud Russell Papers.
54. Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, esp. 24.
55. Eileen Scully, "Still Strangers at the Gate: Recent Scholarship on Pre-1900 Sino-American Relations," in Warren I. Cohen, ed., *Pacific Passage: The Study of American-East Asian Relations on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 130; Charles W. Hayford, "The Open Door Raj: Chinese-American Cultural Relations 1900–1945," in *Pacific Passage*, 143; Paul Harris, "Cultural Imperialism and American Protestant Missionaries: Collaboration and Dependency in Mid-Nineteenth-Century China," in the *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (August 1991): 309–38. The common ground shared by missionaries and many churchgoing lay-people in the United States is also a major component James Reed's analysis in his *The Missionary Mind and American East Asia Policy* regarding why missionary efforts could be so influential in their impact on popular views about China.
56. Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Missionary Women in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), esp. 128–73,

263. See also Carol C. Chin, "Beneficent Imperialists: American Women Missionaries in China at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 3 (June 2003): 327–52.
57. Brown to Clausen, 2 September 1939, file 16, box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
58. Mary Katherine Russell to Mother and All, 24 August 1941, file 11, box 10, RG 30, Arthur Carson Papers, Record Group 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut. For biographical information on Russell, see Charles Hodge Corbett, *Shantung Christian University* (New York: United Board for Christian Colleges in China, 1955), 219.
59. On renting the radio receiver, see Elleroy Smith diary entry, 29 February 1936, file 1, box 197, Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers, Record Group 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut [hereafter Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers]. On receiving personal messages via the radio, see Elleroy Smith diary entries, 3 March 1936 and 16 September 1937, both diaries from file 1, box 197 (the "Aimee" referred to here is Aimee Millican, covered extensively in chap. 5). On receiving the message from Iowa, see Elleroy Smith diary entry, 12 October 1941, file 1, box 197. Both Elleroy and Maybelle Smith used the 17 August 1941 entry of their diaries to note that they listened to the *Mailbag* program without any expression of disappointment when no message arrived for them; Elleroy Smith, diary entry, 17 August 1941, file 1, box 197 and Maybelle Smith diary entry from 17 August 1941, Maybelle Smith, *Five Year Diary: 1938–1942*, file 7, box 195.
60. For books read, see the back pages of the Smiths' diaries; specific reference to completing *Gone With the Wind* contained in Elleroy Smith's 12 July 1940 diary entry, while *For Whom the Bell Tolls* appears in the reading list at the back of Maybelle Smith's diary covering the years 1938–1942 (in the list compiled for 1941). On specific movies mentioned, see Maybelle Smith diary entry from 20 November 1938 and Elleroy Smith diary entries from 15 April 1937 and 1 May 1940. On newspapers delivered to the Smiths, see Elleroy Smith diary entries from 15 September 1940 and 18 November 1940. For select holiday celebrations and observances, see Maybelle Smith diary entries from 20 November 1940 and 25 December 1941, and Elleroy Smith diary entries from 28 November 1936, 18 December 1936, 25 December 1936 (in which he comments that "Santa Claus was generous as usual"), and 4 July 1938. For magazines arriving via the mail, see Elleroy Smith diary entry, 27 January 1938. Maybelle Smith diaries from file 7, box 195; Elleroy Smith diaries from file 1, box 197; Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers.
61. All the following cited information is from the Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers. Quote on radio rental comment Elleroy Smith diary entry, 29 February 1936. For receiving messages and the enthusiasm for hearing programming broadcast from the US, see Elleroy Smith diary entries from 3 March 1936, 16 September 1937, and 24 September 1937; all from file 1, box 197. Quotes about listening to Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration recorded in Elleroy Smith diary entry, 20 January 1937, file 1, box 197; and Maybelle Smith diary entry, 20 January 1937, file 6, box 195. For listening to religious programming and the communal nature of the Smiths' radio listening habits, see Maybelle Smith diary entries, 17 August 1937 and 19 December

- 1937, file 6, box 195; and Elleroy Smith diary entries, 25 December 1936, 1 January 1937, 19 February 1937, 21 December 1937, 6 March 1937, 17 August 1937, 16 September 1937, 24 September 1937, 19 December 1937, 4 July 1938, file 1, box 197.
62. For the purchase of a radio for Elleroy Smith's parents, see Elleroy Smith diary entry from 31 December 1938. For listening to Charlie McCarthy, see Elleroy Smith diary entry from 13 August 1939. For department store shopping, see Elleroy Smith diary entry from 11 March 1939 and Maybelle Smith diary entries from 14 August 1939, 21 August 1939, and 5 September 1939. For the baseball game, see Maybelle Smith diary entry from 21 July 1939. For World's Fair visit, see Maybelle Smith diary entry from 19 July 1939. References to seeing movies are entered into both Smiths' diaries throughout the furlough. For the specific reference to the *Wizard of Oz*, see Elleroy Smith diary entry from 28 August 1939 and Maybelle Smith diary entry from 28 August 1939. Elleroy Smith diaries are in file 1, box 197, Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers. Maybelle Smith diaries are in file 7, box 195, Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers.
 63. Elleroy Smith diary entry, 24 March 1940, file 1, box 197, Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers.
 64. Laura Ward to Helen Ward, 1 September 1941, file 9, box 207, Laura Ward Papers, Record Group 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut [hereafter Laura Ward Papers].
 65. For biographical information on Laura Ward, see Laura Dwight Ward, Life Sketch, 27 May 1914; Laura Dwight Ward, Doctrinal Statement, 27 May 1914; and "Miss Laura D. Ward," undated newspaper clipping with no publication information, all documents in file 10, box 207, Laura Ward Papers. Specific reference to Ward's mathematics degree comes from Ward's biographical sketch that accompanies the finding aid for the Ward Family Papers housed at Mt. Holyoke College. This finding aid was accessed through the Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections website, <http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/mountholyoke/mshm205.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010). For more on Ward's furlough, see Ruth Desmond, "Miss Ward Describes Conditions in China," in *Granite State Free Press* (New Hampshire), 15 October 1937, file 10, box 207, Laura Ward Papers. For the arrival of newspapers and magazines via the mail, see Laura Ward to Family, 31 March 1932, file 8, box 207. For the phonograph and record collection, see Laura Ward to Family Mine [sic], 29 April 1940, and Laura Ward to Family Mine, 3 February 1941, file 9, box 207. For a reference to the acquisition of American consumer items, see Laura Ward to Family Mine, 2 October 1940, file 9, box 207.
 66. Laura Ward to Dear Family Mine, 29 November 1940, file 9, box 207, Laura Ward Papers.
 67. "Excerpts from Bob McClure's letter of July 18th to August 2nd (1940)," file 10, box 122, Jeanie McClure Papers, Record Group 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library Special Collections, New Haven, Connecticut [hereinafter Jeanie McClure Papers]. See also "Excerpts from Bob McClure's August Letters (1940)" in the same file and box.
 68. Bill Trent, "Dr. Robert McClure: missionary-surgeon extraordinaire," *Canada Medical Association Journal* 132 (February 1985): 431–4.

69. All quoted portions from “Excerpts from Bob McClure’s August Letters (1940),” file 10, box 122, Jeanie McClure Papers, except “My heart is in the USA.” That latter quote is from “Excerpts from Bob McClure’s letter of July 18th to August 2nd (1940).”
70. A. Holmes Johnson to the Federal Communications Commission, 16 March 1939, file 89-6, box 365, FCC Records 1927–46. Information on A. Holmes Johnson’s library legacy in Kodiak can be found at the website for the library bearing his name, <http://www.city.kodiak.ak.us/Library/Pages/default.aspx> (last accessed 26 September 2010). I received additional information on Johnson from his son, Dr. Bob Johnson, who still resides in Kodiak (email to author, received 27 January 2010).
71. Direct quotes are from Grace Morrison Boynton’s diary entries (in order of appearance) 13 June 1939, 12 August 1939, and 20 August 1939. Other information about Boynton and her exposure to American communications, media, and culture in China are from diary entries dated 13 March 1937, 17 April 1937, 6 July 1937, 28 July 1937, 3 January 1939, 26 February 1939, 18 May 1939, 31 July 1939, 19 October 1941, and 26 December 1943. 1937 entries from “Diary, Jan 5–Dec 22, 1937 Typescript,” file A-155 7; 1939 entries from “Diary, Jan 3–Dec 25, 1939 Typescript,” file A-155 9; 1941 entry from “Diary, Jan 3–Dec 28, 1941–typescript,” file A-155 13; 1943 entry from “Diary, Jan 1–Dec 26, 1943–typescript file A-155 17; Boxes 1 and 2; Grace Morrison Boynton Papers, Arthur and Laura Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
72. In studies on immigration to the United States, the role that various forms of mass media (particularly the ethnic press) played in appealing to notions of expatriate identity and keeping immigrant groups “connected” to their homeland is a prominent theme. For example, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Renqiu Yu, *To Save China, To Save Ourselves: The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance of New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); and Brian Masamuru Hayashi, *‘For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren’: Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism Among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).
73. Douglas, *Listening In*, 24.

5 “Win China for Christ through Radio”: Religious Broadcasting and the American Missionary Movement in Nationalist China

1. Conversion stories about Mr. Chang, the unidentified wealthy merchant, and the Jiangsu political leader are from “Shanghai Christian Broadcasting Association,” *Chinese Recorder*, February 1937, 129; Mr. Yang’s conversion story is from A.H.L. Clark, “This is Station XMHD,” in *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 2, no. 3 (January–March 1938): pp. 2–3, Shanghai Christian Broadcasting Association Records, Historical Records (HR) 154, Special Collections, Yale University Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter SCBA Records).

2. C.J. Lowe, "Editorials," in *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (January–March 1937): 1. This issue of the *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* is from a microfilm collection available through Yale University Library. It is a different collection than the ones I researched in the Missionary Pamphlet Collection at Yale University's Divinity School Library, cited in n. 1 above. The microfilm collection is more extensive than the "Missionary Pamphlet Collection." Each collection, however, has issues that the other one does not. *Bulletins* contained on the microfilm role will be hereinafter cited as "Yale University Library Microfilm" to distinguish those issues from those in the Yale Divinity Library's "Missionary Pamphlet Collection."
3. Joseph King, "The Beginning of the Christian Broadcasting Association," in *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (August–September 1936): p. 1, SCBA Records.
4. Though Americans are prominent in this story, it is also important to note that Christian broadcasting in 1930s and early 1940s China was not exclusively an American project. Other missionaries and Chinese were also significant forces in the development of religious broadcasting in China. An analysis of what Christianity signified to these various groups and how they engaged with Christian broadcasting on their own terms is significant in its own right, but that analysis is beyond the particular scope of this chapter. This chapter's focus on the American involvement with Christian broadcasting and how it spoke to particular issues of American national identity and anti-Japanese politics is not meant to imply those other stories are somehow less important.
5. The unequal treaties, extraterritorial rights, and other special privileges often helped missionaries and their Chinese converts acquire property, establish churches, and avoid Chinese jurisdiction in a way they hoped might help their proselytizing. These practices also made missionaries and their converts vulnerable to nationalist and xenophobic anger. For the political complications of exporting Christianity in this increasingly nationalistic context, see Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, 293–4. For an analysis of how cultural differences made exporting Western Christianity into a Chinese context difficult, see Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*, translated by Janet Lloyd (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) esp. 146, 150–1, 196, and 246; Charles Weber, "Conflicting Cultural Traditions in China: Baptist Educational Work in the Nineteenth Century," in Neils, ed., *United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China*, 41.
6. "Win China For Christ Through Radio," undated but likely from the late 1930s, file "China Christian Broadcasting Association," China Christian Broadcasting Association Records, HR108, Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut (the China Christian Broadcasting Association was, in fact, the same organization as the Shanghai Christian Broadcasting Association). For the growth of indigenous Chinese Christianity, see Daniel Bays, "The Growth of Independent Christianity in China," in *Christianity in China From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 307–16, esp. 310. Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum notes that the majority of Chinese Christians were actually fundamentalists who had little interest in the liberal Protestantism of the major social gospel-influenced Christian missionary institutions like Yanjing [Yenching] University. See Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum, "Christianity,

- Academics, and National Salvation in China: Yenching University, 1924–1949,” *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 13 (2004–06): 39.
7. “Win China For Christ Through Radio;” K.S. Lee, “Some Appealing Facts About the Christian Broadcasting Station,” in *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (August–September 1936): p. 2, file “Shanghai Christian Broadcasting Association, 1936–1938,” SCBA Records. I have left K.S. Lee’s name in its original Wade–Giles Romanization because I was unable to find any reference to what the initials “K” and “S” represent, which precluded presenting his name’s pinyin equivalent with any accuracy. In pinyin, the family name is “Li.”
 8. “Win China For Christ Through Radio.” Station registration information is from the American Trade Commissioner in Shanghai A. Viola Smith, “Radio Markets–China,” 11 March 1937, p. 30, file “Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1937–March,” box 124, BFDC Attachés’ Reports. For information on the backgrounds of Chen, Koo, and Zau, see Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution*, esp. 69, 160; Walter N. Lacy, *One Hundred Years of China Methodism* (New York: Abingdon–Cokesbury, 1948), 61; “Bishop from China,” *Time*, 13 March 1944, retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,932420,00.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010); Edward R. Slack, *Opium, State, and Society: China’s Narco-Economy and the Guomindang, 1924–1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 58–9; Kevin Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan. *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 175. On US-based religious broadcasting, see Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion, and Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 24–6.
 9. *The Madras Series: Presenting Papers Based Upon the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th*, Vol. III, Evangelism (New York: International Missionary Council, 1939); “Wuhan Christian Broadcasting Association,” *Chinese Recorder*, April 1936, 253.
 10. “The Present Situation: Christian Broadcasting in Peiping,” *Chinese Recorder*, June 1936, 382.
 11. “Radio Evangelism,” *Chinese Recorder*, June 1937, 400.
 12. Aimee Millican to Friends at Home, 9 February 1940, file 10, box 1, RG 199, Millican Family Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereinafter Millican Family Papers).
 13. A. Millican to Edith Millican, 2 April 1940, file 10, box 1, Millican Family Papers.
 14. A. Millican (credited as Mrs. F.R. Millican), “A Whole Family For Christ Through the Radio Broadcast,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (August–September 1936), 2, file “Shanghai Christian Broadcasting Association, 1936–1938,” SCBA Records.
 15. K.S. Lee, “Some Appealing Facts About the Christian Broadcasting Station,” 2. Regarding views in the US of broadcasting’s benefits to the blind and other disabled individuals, NBC Vice President Frank Arnold declared in 1933 that radio was “the only medium where a blind man had just as good a prospect as the man with two good eyes” (quoted in Craig, *Fireside Politics*, 22). Another commentator wrote, “to the blind, the deaf, the shut-ins, radio broadcasting has been a new kind of sunshine.” Broadcasting ensured that

- these unfortunates would no longer be “blind to the fast pace of civilization” (unfortunately, the writer did not elaborate on how the deaf could benefit from broadcasting). A draft of this essay, entitled “Radio And What It Does To The World’s Unfortunate,” unfortunately had no further author or publication information. It can be found in file 477a, Box 198, Series 14 (General History), Clark Radioana Collection. The article appears to have been written in the 1920s.
16. For the connection between religion and technology, see David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Many and the Spirit of Invention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997). For an analysis that focuses on the American context, see Nye, *America as Second Creation*.
 17. F.R. Millican, “Radio as an Instrument for Good,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (January–March 1937): p. 8, Yale University Library Microfilm.
 18. Lee S. Huizenga, “Broadcasting the Gospel Message,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 5, no 1–4 (1940): p. 14, Yale University Library Microfilm.
 19. A.R. Gallimore, “The Radio in Christian Service,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 2, no. 1 (July–September 1937): pp. 3–4, Yale University Library Microfilm.
 20. H.G.C. Hallock, “Radio and Prayer,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 4, nos. 2–4 (July–December 1939): pp. 3–4, Yale University Library Microfilm.
 21. *The Madras Series* (n. 10 above), 140–1.
 22. F.W. Price, “Evangelism and Religious Education,” *Chinese Recorder*, April 1936, 236.
 23. K.J. Faulkner, “The Radio. A Means to Bring Him In,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 4, nos. 2–4 (July–December 1939): p. 13, Yale University Library Microfilm.
 24. “Shanghai Broadcasting Situation and Future Prospects,” *China Weekly Review*, 24 June 1939, 98.
 25. For example, see the daily programs in English and Chinese in any of the *Christian Broadcast Bulletins*. For the description in this paragraph, I specifically consulted the January–March 1937 and January–December 1940 issues [no page numbers are provided on the pages the schedules appear]. The Sunday schedule description is from *The Madras Series*, 141. (I would like to thank my colleague Kristin Mulready-Stone for her help in translating the Chinese language program schedule).
 26. Lawrence D. Kessler, *The Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895–1951* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 158–9. Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857–1927* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). 150, 194.
 27. Price, “Evangelism and Religious Education,” 231–2, 236. For information about the resentment that the burden that social gospel programs placed on budgets, see Kessler, *Jiangyin Mission Station*, 158–9; Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution*, 60–1.
 28. For XMHD’s reception range, see *The Madras Series*, 141. On radio’s ability to reach listeners located nowhere near a church, see “The Present Situation: Christian Broadcasting in Peiping,” 382. For Christian broadcasting as the antidote to the perceived harmful effects of “popular” radio, see Jen-Mei Tan, “Christian Youth and Education,” *Chinese Recorder*, December 1939, 714; for a similar concern, see Paul T.H. Chen, “Christian Education Through Book Service,” *Chinese Recorder*, August 1941, 412. On the Millicans’

- connection to the Oxford Group, see Paul French, *Through the Looking Glass: China's Foreign Journalists from Opium Wars to Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 187. French also mentions the Oxford Group's connection to Alcoholics Anonymous. For a more extensive discussion of that story, see John H. Peterson, Jr., "The International Origins of Alcoholics Anonymous," *Contemporary Drug Problems* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 53–74.
29. "Radio Evangelism," 400.
 30. "Fruits of Station XMHD," *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 2, no. 3 (January–March 1938): pp. 6–7, Yale University Library Microfilm. Interestingly, not a single listener testimony quoted was actually written in the convert's own pen. Instead, missionaries reported these stories to the SCBA second-hand. While that caveat raises some legitimate suspicions about the verity of these accounts, it also underscores the fact these missionary listeners viewed the station from the vantage point of its evangelical, not social gospel, utility.
 31. Hallock, "Radio and Prayer," 3. Biographical information on Hallock is taken from the information on the Metropolitan Presbyterian Mission contained on the website for "The Ricci 21st Century Roundtable on the History of Christianity in China," <http://ricci.rt.usfca.edu/institution/view.aspx?institutionID=384> (last accessed on 26 September 2010) and "Church News," in the *Putnam County Courier*, 11 January 1895, <http://www.localarchives.org/WorkArea/downloadasset.aspx?id=26853> (last accessed on 26 September 2010).
 32. Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 6–7, 205–8; Charles Edward Jefferson, "Searching the Scriptures," XMHD broadcast from 22 May 1939, *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 4, nos. 2–4 (July–December 1939): pp. 15–20, Yale University Library Microfilm. (Jefferson died before the broadcast, so Carlton Lacy read the prepared text over the air; quote is from p. 17). Prior to coming to China, Jefferson served as the past of the Broadway United Christian Church from 1898 to 1929. See http://www.broadwayucc.org/p_jefferson.php (last accessed on 26 September 2010).
 33. On listening to W6XBE–KGEI, see Frank R. Millican to A. Millican, 11 September 1941 and 28 September 1941, file 31, box 1, Millican Family Papers. On the letter to daughter Edith, see F. Millican to E. Millican, 12 April 1938, file 30, box 1, Millican Family Papers.
 34. For Elleroy Smith's letter regarding XMHD, see *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (January–March 1937), p. 13, Yale University Library Microfilm.
 35. Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, "Introduction: Ambiguous Attachments—Religion, Identity, and Nation," in Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, eds., *Religion, Identity, and Change: Perspectives on Global Transformations* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 4–6; Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 21; Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke, "The Past Present and Future of an Identity Theory," in *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (December 2000): esp. 287, 289, 292; Peter J. Burke, "Relationships Among Multiple Identities," in *Advances in Identity Theory and Research*, eds., Peter J. Burke, Timothy J. Owens, Richard T. Sherpe, and Peggy Thoits (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), esp. 201–2; Peggy A. Thoits, "Personal Agency in Multiple Role Identities," in *Advances in Identity Theory and Research*, esp. 181–3.

36. Elleroy and Maybelle Smith to Our Dear Friends, 10 November 1937, pp. 4–6, file 7, box 1, Millican Family Papers.
37. Stryker and Burke, “The Past, Present and Future of an Identity Theory,” 288–90; on Russell in China, see Garner, *Precious Fire*; see also chap. 4 of this study.
38. Gary Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 19, 22, 25, 207–8; Richard Carwardine, “The Know-nothing party, the protestant evangelical community, and American national identity,” in Stuart Mews, ed., *Religion and National Identity: Papers Read at the Nineteenth Summer Meeting and the Twentieth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 449–64.
39. Jeffrey Swanson, *Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 158–9; Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 23–34; William Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9, 44–5, 51–60.
40. A. Millican, undated and untitled unpublished draft of an article, file 28, box 1, Millican Family Papers.
41. Swanson, *Echoes of the Call*, 148.
42. For the development of the notion of a “special relationship,” see Hunt, *Making of a Special Relationship*. On the interconnections between the missionary movement in China and the larger American populace at home, see Reed, *The Missionary Mind*.
43. Thomson, *While China Faced West*, esp. 153–4; Jespersen, *American Images of China*, 24–5, 84–5.
44. Thomson, *While China Faced West*, 153–95, 226–30; Jespersen, *American Images of China*, 34–5.
45. A. Millican to E. Millican, 5 January 1936, file 6, box 1, Millican Family Papers. For further cooperative efforts see F. Millican to E. Millican, 5 April 1937, file 30, box 1, Millican Family Papers. Millican’s letter did not identify Zhang Qun [Chang Chun] by name. I identified Zhang as the Minister she was discussing through *Who’s Who in China: Biographies of Chinese Leaders*, 5th ed (Shanghai: China Weekly Review, 1936), 5–6. According to this volume, Zhang had been appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs in December 1935. For additional information on Zhang see “Hao Hao!,” 28 April 1947, *Time*, available online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,793568,00.html> [last accessed 26 September 2010]. Unfortunately, these sources do not provide a name for his “attractive” wife (the adjective used by *Time*).
46. Chiang Kai-shek, “My Spiritual Conception of Good Friday,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 4 (April–June 1937): p. 1, Yale University Library Microfilm. For reference to Chiang and Song Meiling’s pamphlets, see C.J. Lowe, “Opportunity,” pp. 1–2 in the same issue of the *Christian Broadcast Bulletin*; previous issues of the bulletin also contain letters in which listeners request the station send them Song’s pamphlet. Letter praising the Chiangs’ Christianity are from the *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (January–March 1937): p. 12, Yale University Library Microfilm.
47. A. Millican to E. Millican, 1 July 1936, file 6, box 1, Millican Family Papers.

48. A. Millican to E. Millican, 3 January 1937, file 7, box 1, Millican Family Papers. See also Jespersen, 31–34.
49. Youli Sun, *China and the Origins of the Pacific War*, 87–91.
50. F. Millican to E. Millican, 21 August 1937; A. Millican to E. Millican, 29 August 1937; F. Millican to E. Millican, 7 November 1937; file 30, box 1, Millican Family Papers.
51. All quotes are from Elleroy and Maybelle Smith to Our Dear Friends, 10 November 1937. Frank Millican also used the term “grand stand seat” to describe their view of the war from the apartment in Shanghai; see F. Millican to E. Millican, 14 September 1937, file 30, box 1, Millican Family Papers. A further description of the Millican’s wartime experience in Shanghai can be found in A. Millican to E. Millican, 3 October 1937, file 7, box 1, Millican Family Papers.
52. A. Millican to E. Millican, 12 December 1937, file 7, box 1, Millican Family Papers.
53. Reactions to Japanese news (including quotes) from A. Millican to E. Millican, 5 November 1937, file 7, box 1, Millican Family Papers. Millican’s efforts to enable converts to listen to the Chongqing broadcasts is from A. Millican to E. Millican, 27 October 1939 and A. Millican to E. Millican, 31 December 1939, file 9, box 1, Millican Family Papers. Japanese efforts to control the news reaching East Asia during the war are the focus of the next chapter.
54. Information about the damage XMHD sustained and the difficulties in completing the repair work is from the transcript of the third XMHA broadcast directed toward Christian missionaries. See Transcript of NCC Broadcast from Station XMHA, 19 September 1937, New York Public Library non-circulating material, call number ZDZ (National Christian Council of China. Bulletin. Broadcast) (hereinafter NCC Broadcast Bulletins, NYPL). For additional information about the impact of the typhoon on XMHD, see Mrs. A.H. Clark, “This is Station XMHD,” *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 2, no. 3 (January–March 1938): p. 2, Yale University Library Microfilm.
55. For the American influence in the Chinese YMCA, see Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution*; see also Garrett, *Social Reformers in Urban China*, esp. 28–44; Charles A. Keller, “The Christian Student Movement, YMCAs, and Transnationalism in Republican China,” *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 13, no. 1 (2004–06): esp. 64–6. For the American influence in the NCC (including the American education received by many of the Chinese principles), see Thomson. *While China Faced West*, 50–8. For the cooperation between the YMCA and the NCC, see Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution*, 56–61, and Thomson, *While China Faced West*, 204. For the ties between both groups and the Chinese government, see Thomson, *While China Faced West*, 66–75, 191, 204 and Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution*, 119–20. XMHA’s anti-Japanese character is addressed in chap 6.
56. Transcripts of NCC Broadcasts from Station XMHA, 10 October 1937 and 27 March 1937, NCC Broadcast Bulletins, NYPL.
57. Transcripts of NCC Broadcasts from Station XMHA, 26 September 1937, 23 January 1938, and 24 October 1937, NCC Broadcast Bulletins, NYPL.
58. Transcript of NCC Broadcast from Station XMHA, 13 March 1937, NCC Broadcast Bulletins, NYPL.

59. Ronald Rees, ed., *Christians in Action: A Record of Work in War-time China by Seven Missionaries* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), xi, 14–15. The editor, Ronald Rees, was an Englishman and another one of the NCC's regular broadcasters for its Sunday program. He too adopted a more restrained tone when broadcasting than when writing. Although claiming that he and his fellow contributors "harbour no bitterness against those who are inflicting all this cruel suffering," he later noted that missionary compounds throughout the country often offered "the one place of security for the population against rape and murder" committed by Japanese soldiers (pp. vii, 10).
60. American Consul in Foochow [Fuzhou] Edward E. Rice, "Political Report for April 1941," 7 May 1941, 893.00 P.R. Foochow/159, DSNA 1940–44. For a brief overview of Japan's transgressions against American property and citizens after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, see Cohen, *America's Response to China*, 120.
61. For the repairs to XMHD, see "Editorial Briefs," *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (January–June 1939): p. 1, Yale University Library Microfilm; for the broadcast detailing one family's hardships during the 1937 battle for Nanjing, see T.L. Chen, "A Personal Testimony," *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 5, nos. 1–4 (January–December 1940): p. 13, Yale University Library Microfilm (the specific date of this broadcast was not mentioned in the newsletter). Information on Beath's broadcast is from Sterling Beath, "The Influence of the Radio," XMHD broadcast from 5 February 1939, reprinted in the *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (January–June 1939): pp. 19–20, Yale University Library Microfilm (quotes are from p. 19). Additional biographical information about Sterling Beath is from <http://evansvillehistory.net/107WESTLibery.html> (last accessed on 26 September 2010).
62. "XMHD is Now Object of Interference," *China Press*, 26 April 1940, copy of article in file D6813/14/X(40), RG 263, Records of the Shanghai Municipal Police, United States National Archives microfilm [researched entirely off-site] (hereinafter SMP Records); the extensive reach of the station's broadcasts is referred to in the American Consul in Shanghai Richard Butrick to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 15 August 1940, 893.102S/2186, DSNA 1940–44; the promotion of newspaper subscriptions is from *China Broadcast Bulletin* 5, nos. 1–4 (January–December 1940): p. 4, Yale University Library Microfilm.
63. For the ownership and registration transfer, see Butrick to Hull, 15 August 1940. This document identifies XMHD as an American station deserving of US official support. Prewar documentation, including A.V. Smith "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937 identifies the station as Chinese. For the Shanghai Municipal Police cooperation with the Japanese to silence Chinese radio, see Benson, "Back to Business as Usual," esp. 282 and 296. A copy of the pledge the police had Chinese station managers sign is filed with "Chinese and semi-Chinese radio broadcasting stations operating in the International Settlement," Shanghai Municipal Police Report, 30 November 1937, file D 6813/14/VI, SMP Records.
64. Consular reports sent to Washington from a variety of cities around China provide particular examples of these strategies. For example, diplomatic reports from Shantou documenting the events of June and July 1941 comment on the anti-American tone of Japanese-controlled newspapers. The

May 1940 political report from Shanghai noted a long-standing problem with the censorship of American mail arriving in China, as well as the jamming of American radio. The Shanghai political report from August 1940 includes a rich array of examples, including the jamming of XMHD, sharp criticisms of the United States by the Japanese-controlled press, an American ship carrying missionaries that was prevented from docking in Shanghai by Japan, and outright terrorism against the American-owned press in Shanghai. For these documents, see the American Consul in Swatow [Shantou] Kenneth Yearns to Hull, "Political Review for June 1941, 5 July 1941, 893.00 P.R. Swatow/163; Yearns to Hull, "Political Review for July 1941, 4 August 1941, 893.00 P.R. Swatow/164; Butrick to Hull, "Political Report for May, 1940, 11 June 1940, 893.00 P.R. Shanghai/140; Butrick to Hull, "Political Report for August, 1940," 7 September 1940, 893.00 P.R. Shanghai/143; all files from DSNA 1940–44. The entire collection of the 893.00 P.R. files in DSNA 1940–44 offers many more relevant examples.

65. Butrick to Hull, "Political Report for August, 1940," 7 September 1940, 893.00 P.R. Shanghai/143, DSNA 1940–44.
66. "XMHD is Now Object of Interference;" see also Butrick to Hull, 15 August 1940. On the U.S.-Japanese tensions over the move into Indochina, see Jonathan Marshall, *To Have and Have Not: Southeast Asian Raw Materials and the Origins of the Pacific War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 80–5.
67. Butrick to Hull, 15 August 1940; Butrick to Hull, 18 September 1940, 893.102 S/2276 (cross-referenced in file 893.76/120); Butrick to Hull, "Political Report for August, 1940," 7 September 1940; Butrick to Hull, "Political Report for September, 1940," October 1940 [specific date illegible], 893.00 P.R. Shanghai/144; Butrick to Hull, "Political Report for November, 1940," 7 December 1940, 893.00 P.R. Shanghai/146; all files from DSNA 1940–44.
68. Carlton Lacey, "The Use of the Bible in the Home," China Bible House Broadcast over XMHD on 22 August 1938, reprinted in the *Christian Broadcast Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (January–June 1939): pp. 6–8, Yale University Library Microfilm (quote is from p. 6).

6 "Unofficial Radio Hell-Raiser": Radio News and US-Japanese Conflict on the Eve of the Pacific War

1. Carroll Alcott, *My War With Japan* (New York: H. Holt & Co., 1943), p. 296–8; see also "Newscaster of Shanghai," *Time*, 20 July 1940, accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,764298,00.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010).
2. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 17, 22, 279, 282–3, 340–1; quote is from page 279. See also "Foreign News: New Order in Shanghai," *Time*, 29 July 1940, accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,764271,00.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010). The 1933 restaurant incident is mentioned in Matt Weinstock, "Some Job Tryouts Take an Odd Turn," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 May 1965, section a, 6.
3. For how mass media can elicit contrasting reactions from audiences with different national perspectives, see Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (New York: Verso Press, 1998), 58–74.

4. Velva Brown to Frances Clausen, 4 October 1937, file 14, box 31 and Brown to Clausen, 13 November 1938 and 20 November 1938, file 15, box 31, Velva Brown Papers. Quoted portions are from the 4 October 1937 correspondence.
5. The taking of radio news notes mentioned in Brown to Clausen, 4 October 1937, file 14; listening to reports from London, Berlin, and Australia noted in Brown to Clausen, 13 November 1938, file 15; the decision to stop writing the letter to listen to radio news noted in Brown to Clausen, 30 October 1937, file 14; all correspondence from box 31, Velva Brown Papers.
6. Many of the reports submitted by the American Trade Commissioner in Shanghai A. Viola Smith are particularly valuable for the information they provide about XMHA. See "Broadcasting, Airways Beacons, and Radio Equipment," April 1935, p. 4–5, box 119; "Radio Markets–China," 19 May 1938, file "Foreign Service, Copies of Reports, Peiping–1938–May," box 126; "Radio Markets–China," 15 August 1939, p. 38, file "Foreign Service–Copies of Reports–Peiping–1939–July–August," box 126; all of Smith's reports are from BFDC Attachés' Reports. See also the Commissioner of the Shanghai Police Kenneth M. Bourne to the Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Council G. Godfrey Phillips, 6 January 1939, pp. 46–51, and Bourne to Phillips, 9 March 1939, p. 31, file U001-04-0002813 (Transmission Electrical Messages: Radio Broadcasting and Receiving Stations: Control), SMC Records; Chief of the State Department's Division of Current Information Michael J. McDermott to Maxwell Hamilton of Department of State's Division of Far Eastern Affairs, 15 October 1941, 893.76/141, DSNA 1940–44; Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 15–16; Vivian Wang, "Rags to riches in Shanghai food fight," 31 July 2003, *Shanghai Star*, accessed at <http://app1.chinadaily.com.cn/star/2003/0731/cu18-2.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010).
7. From the BFDC Attachés' Reports, see A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937, pp. 2, 9–10, 12, 102, box 124; A.V. Smith, "Radio Developments in China," July 1937, pp. 3, 7, box 125; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 15 August 1939, 38, 48–9; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets in China" (Special Report No. S-99), 8 June 1938, file "Foreign Service–Copies Of Reports–Peiping–1938–June," box 126. See also A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 13 January 1939, file 544, "Radio–China–1939," box 2479, BFDC General Records 1914–58.
8. A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937, pp. 31, 34, 108; A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 11 November 1937, file 544, "Radio–China–1937–38," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58.
9. For the history of American radio journalism, see Edward Bliss, Jr., *Now The News: The Story of Broadcast Journalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), esp. 76–118 and Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 22–40. David Culbert's study on radio news and foreign affairs demonstrates the lack of objectivity that pervaded the presumably reliable radio newscasts during this period; see David Holbrook Culbert, *News For Everyman: Radio and Foreign Affairs in Thirties America* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1976), esp. 5–6. The prevalence of newscasts as part of other countries' shortwave broadcasting efforts was noted in A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division,

- 11 January 1938, file 544, "Radio-China-1937-38," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58. For a discussion on the blurred lines between news and propaganda broadcast over the international shortwaves, see James Wood, *History of International Broadcasting* (London: Peregrinus, 1992), 31–48; Berg, *On the Shortwaves*.
10. On wartime receiver sales and homemade sets, see Carlton Benson, "Back to Business as Usual," 286–7.
 11. For Alcott's observations about public radio listening, see Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 248. For the reference to Alcott's letters and the letter from the Chinese doctor, see A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 8 March 1939, file 544, "Radio-China-General-1939," box 2479, RG 151, BFDC General Records 1914–58. For Julia Morgan's letters, see Julia Morgan to her father, 16 August 1937 and 3 January 1938, file 143-7, box 143, Julia Morgan Papers, RG 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.
 12. "A Splendid Journalistic Achievement," *The China Journal*, September 1937, 141. For the Smiths receiving word to cancel their Shanghai trip, see Elleroy Smith, diary entries from 16 September and 24 September 1937, file 1, box 197, Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers. For other efforts to keep up with war news via the radio, see Maybelle Smith diary entries from 15 August 1937, 17 August 1937, and 26 September 1937, file 6, box 195, and Elleroy Smith, diary entry from 15 August 1937, file 1, box 197, Elleroy and Maybelle Smith Papers.
 13. A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets-China," 19 May 1938, p. 5.
 14. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 16.
 15. Hamilton to McDermott, 9 October 1941, and Hamilton to McDermott, 15 October 1941, 893.76/141, DSN 1940–44.
 16. For a general discussion of Johnson's work as it related to the Rockefeller Foundation, the "social gospel," and the Chinese Nationalists, see Thomson, *When China Faced West*, esp. 50–66, 221–41. The predominance of radio as a source of news, the dinner party experience, and the bedroom placement of his own radio is from William R. Johnson to Ina Johnson, 16 January 1938, file 58; regret at missing the radio news due to working late is noted in W.R. Johnson to I. James and Laura, 19 November 1937 file 58; Johnson's typing up of news notes is referenced in W.R. Johnson to family, 2 December 1937, file 57 and W.R. Johnson to I. Johnson, 12 September 1938, file 61; Johnson's delight at seeing his access to radio news restored is noted in one Johnson letter that is missing its cover page noting the date and recipient; that letter, filed in file 63, was likely sent to his family, and written between May and August 1939; aforementioned correspondence from box 4, William R. Johnson Papers, RG 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter William R. Johnson Papers).
 17. Frank Rawlinson to children, 3 August 1937, file 32, box 161, Rawlinson Family Papers, RG 8, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut (hereinafter Rawlinson Family Papers).
 18. For the general situation in Shanghai once the war reached it, including stray bombs, refugees, and the protection of "Japan Town," see Parks M. Coble, *Chinese Capitalists in Japan's New Order: The Occupied Lower Yangzi*,

- 1937–1945 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 11–12; Dong, *Shanghai 1842–1949*, 252–3.
19. “Holocaust” reference is from “China Held Guilty in Shanghai Blast,” *New York Times*, 27 August 1937, 3. For the casualty figures, description of the scene after the bombs fell, including the decapitated policeman, see Dong, 253–4. The circumstances of Rawlinson’s death are described in “Dr. Frank Rawlinson,” *China Weekly Review*, 21 August 1937, 422, 427. Rawlinson’s son Alfred wrote at the top of the elder Rawlinson’s last letter that it arrived after the family was notified of his death; see F. Rawlinson to children, 3 August 1937, file 32, box 161, Rawlinson Family Papers. One of Rawlinson’s other sons, John Rawlinson, is also the author of a scholarly article on his father’s life and work in China. See John Rawlinson, “Frank Rawlinson, China Missionary, 1902–1937: Veteran Deputationist,” in Neals, ed., *United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China*, 111–32.
 20. “Dr. Frank Rawlinson,” *China Weekly Review*, 21 August 1937, 422, 427; Margaret Thomson to Nancy Thomson, 15 August 1937, file 30, box 2, Margaret Thomson Papers, Arthur and Laura Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; W.R. Johnson to family, 20 August 1937, file 59, box 4, William R. Johnson Papers.
 21. For information on Boynton, the outbreak of war, listening to the radio with her neighbor, and the quoting of that neighbor, see Grace M. Boynton, “At Yenching University, August 1937: A Letter from Grace M. Boynton, Wellesley, 1912, a member of the Department of English at Yenching,” pp. 2–4, file 92, box 27, William R. Johnson Papers. Comparison to 1914 from 25 August 1939 diary entry, p. 244, file A-155 9, box 1, Grace Morrison Boynton Papers, 1925–1951, Arthur and Laura Schlesinger Library Special Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; for additional references Boynton makes to using the radio to follow war news in the same collection, see 14 July 1937 diary entry, p. 32, 27 July 1937 diary entry, p. 48, 1 August 1937 diary entry, p. 68, file A-155 5, box 1; 12 August 1939 diary entry, p. 236, file A-155 9, box 1; 19 October 1941 diary entry, p. 68, file A-155 13, box 2. For Yanjing University and its mission, see Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino–Western Relations, 1916–1952* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), esp. 22; see also Rosenbaum, “Christianity, Academics, and National Salvation in China,” 25–54. Rosenbaum notes that the university actually began as a conservative evangelical institution, but adjusted its mission toward the social gospel perspective in light of the combined growing influence of liberal Protestantism and the volatile Chinese domestic political situation of the 1920s.
 22. Maud Russell to KGEI, 9 May 1940, M. Morgan (in Tianjin) to KGEI, n.d., and Reverend Vincent Morrison to KGEI, 23 April 1940, W6XBE–KGEI 1940 Letters, 894.74/254, DSNA 1940–44. For Viola Smith’s opinion, see A.V. Smith to the BFDC’s Electrical Division, 30 March 1939, file 544, “Radio–China–1939,” box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58.
 23. Walter T. Sullivan to A.V. Smith, 25 April 1939, 894.74/201 and the American Consul General in Shanghai Clarence Gauss to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 25 August 1939 [Section 2], 894.74/188, DSNA 1930–39.
 24. Gauss to Hull, 30 August 1939 [Section 2] and 30 August 1939 [Section 3], 894.74/188, DSNA 1930–39. In “Section 3” of the above citations, Gauss

- expressed doubts about Smith's charges of intentional interference were accurate, but subsequent investigations bore them out to be true.
25. For Japanese distrust of Western news organizations, see Roger W. Purdy, "Information Imperialism," 295–325. On the politicization of Japanese shortwave broadcasting in the aftermath of the Manchurian Incident and the explicit criticisms those broadcasts directed at the United States, see Jane Robbins, "Presenting Japan: The Role of Overseas Broadcasting by Japan during the Manchurian Incident, 1931–7," *Japan Forum* 13, no. 1 (2001): esp. 43–6. The quote on Australian news broadcasts comes from Lucy D. Meo, *Japan's Radio War on Australia, 1941–1945* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1968), 39–40.
 26. Purdy, "Information Imperialism," esp. 309 and 314. Japanese newsman Iwanaga Yukichi examined the problem of Japanese representation in Western news in a 1927 article entitled "A Look at the Meagerness of Our Nation's News Operations; Envy for the Development of American News Operations;" for this quote and citation see page 309 of the Purdy article. See also Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan*, 155. On the use of Domei reports over Chinese stations and the presumed threat radio posed to Japanese designs, see "The Shanghai Broadcasting Situation and Prospects," editorial from the *China Weekly Review*, 24 June 1939, 97. The State Department's attention to the rising Japanese-American radio tensions was underscored by the fact that this article was sent by Gauss to the State Department, 1 September 1939, 894.74/201, DSNA 1930–39; this article was also reprinted in Shuhsi Hsü, *Japan and the Third Powers*, v. 3 (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1941), 630–43.
 27. For the Army's ascendancy and its effect on radio, see Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan*, 72–101 (esp. 95), 121–68 (esp. 121, 124–5, 140–1, 151, 157), 252–65 (esp. 254 and 254 n. 9), and 285. On the Depression's impact on Japanese politics and society, see LaFeber, *The Clash*, 170. NHK's "cosmopolitan" objectives are quoted in "Nippon Hoso Kyokai (The Broadcasting Corporation of Japan): Overseas Broadcast For North American, China, And The South Seas" [Bulletin 48 for June 1940 of the Broadcasting Company of Japan], enclosed with report from the American Consul in Yokohama Richard F. Boyce, 21 May 1940, 894.76/17, DSNA 1940–44.
 28. "Local Americans Ask Probe of Alleged West Coast Broadcast Jam By Japanese," *China Press*, 4 October 1939, 2; "Propaganda Replaces News as War Censors Go Into Action," *China Weekly Review*, 16 September 1939, 80. For a general discussion of international broadcasting and propaganda, see Wood, *History of International Broadcasting* 36–103. On the development of the ideal of journalistic objectivity, see Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); see also Theodore L. Glasser and James S. Ettema, "Investigative Journalism and the Moral Order," in *Critical Perspectives on Media and Society*, ed. Robert K. Avery and David Eason (New York: The Guilford Press, 1991), 207; Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 98. Although late nineteenth century historical patterns and transformations contributed to the embrace of objectivity as the journalistic ideal in the US, the recognized

- value of factual based reporting that informs that ideal has even deeper roots in American journalism history; see David Paul Nord, "Teleology and News: The Religious Roots of American Journalism, 1630-1730," in the *Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (June 1990): esp. 10–11
29. A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, BFDC, 20 September 1935, file 544, "China-Radio-1929-1936," box 2478, RG 151, BFDC General Records 1914–58; A.V. Smith, "Radio Markets–China," 11 March 1937, p. 31; A.V. Smith, "Political and/or Commercial Use of International Shortwave Broadcasting," 11 January 1938; direct quotes are from the 11 January 1938 document.
 30. T.A. Bisson, *Japan in China* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1939), 22, 309, 310, 317. Hallett Abend, *Chaos in Asia* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1939), 67–72; Randall Gould, *China in the Sun* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1946), 264. John B. Powell, *My Twenty-Five Years in China* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1945), 297. James R. Young, *Behind the Rising Sun* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1941), 148. G.E. Miller, *Shanghai: The Paradise of Adventurers* (New York: Orsay Publishing House, 1937), 99–100. James Bertram, *Unconquered: Journal of a Year's Adventures Among the Fighting Peasants of North China* (New York: John Day Company, 1939), 19. W.R. Johnson to I. Johnson, 8 October 1938, file 61, box 4, William R. Johnson Papers. For a historian's assessment of Chinese representations in Japanese media, see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 100–1.
 31. On shifting American attitudes toward China and Japan, see Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938–1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), esp. 17. The pro-China bias of the American news media, especially *Time* and its China-born publisher Henry Luce, has been well-documented. See LaFeber, 206. For *Time's* pro-China slant, see Jespersen, *American Images of China*, esp. 24–44. The anti-Japanese tone of American radio newscasts is addressed in Culbert, *News for Everyman*, 202. Culbert, who used the term "bad nations" to describe this lumping of Japan and Germany together, also notes that although the tone toward Japan was negative, events in Asia received far less attention in radio news than the developments impacting Europe.
 32. "Interference with the Mail in the Shanghai Post Office," *China Weekly Review*, 24 June 1939, 95; Doris Rubens, "Japanese Propaganda Efforts in Shanghai," *China Weekly Review*, 12 August 1939, 332–6; "Japanese Ask Rigid Control of Newspapers," *China Press*, 15 April 1939, 2; "Nippon Press Blackout Seen by R. Gould," *China Press*, 30 November 1939, 2; "Wanted: An End to Present Postal Chaos; American Chamber Should Take the Lead," *China Weekly Review*, 16 August 1941, 227–8. For a brief examination of Japanese efforts to suppress, intimidate, and even kill foreign journalists identified as antagonistic toward Japan's fight against China, see French, *Through the Looking Glass*, 198–202.
 33. Yuji Tosaka, "The Discourse of Anti-Americanism and Hollywood Movies: Film Import Controls in Japan, 1937–1941," *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 12, no. 1–2 (Spring-Summer 2003): 59–73.

34. On Japanese jamming, see W.R. Johnson to folks, 24 November 1937 and W.R. Johnson to family, 31 December 1937, file 57, box 4, William R. Johnson Papers.
35. A.V. Smith to Gauss, 4 October 1939, 894.74/216, DSNA 1930–39; A.V. Smith, “Interference with Broadcast Programs from Station KGEI, Treasure Island, San Francisco,” 4 April 1940, 894.74/250, DSNA 1940–44. See also “Japanese Stations Jam American News Broadcasts,” 7 October 1939, *China Weekly Review*, 220. The chair of Smith’s “listening committee” was John B. Powell, the well-known anti-Japanese editor of the *China Weekly Review* who endured a few Japanese assassination attempts himself; see Bernard Wasserstein, *Secret War in Shanghai: An Untold Story of Espionage, Intrigue, and Treason in World War II* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 63–4.
36. J. Sheil (from Hong Kong) to W6XBE, 5 April 1939; Reverend W.M. Burnside to W6XBE, April 15, 1939; E.G. Goldsborough to W6XBE, 13 April 1939; all preceding correspondence from W6XBE–KGEI 1939 Letters, 894.74/182, DSNA 1930–39.
37. Counselor to the American Embassy in China Frank Lockhart to the Secretary Hull, Oct. 13, 1939, 894.74/197, DS 1930 – 1939, RG 59, NA The American Consul General in Batavia Erle Dickover to Hull, 30 November 1939, 894.74/225, DSNA 1930–39. See also Dickover to W6XBE Manager E.S. Darlington, 21 December 1939, W6XBE–KGEI 1939 Letters, 894.74/182, DSNA 1930–39.
38. Waldo Heinrichs, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Risks of War,” in Iriye and Cohen, eds., *American, Chinese, and Japanese Perspectives on Wartime Asia*, 147–78.
39. For the FCC-State Department exchanges surrounding W6XBE–KGEI, see Assistant Secretary of State George Messersmith to the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission Lawrence Fly, 23 January 1940, 894.74/225; Fly to Hull, 29 January 1940, 893.74/229; memorandum from Harvey Otterman of the State Department’s Division of International Communications, 7 February 1940, 894.74/ 235; Fly to Hull, undated but received in the Department of State on 29 February 1940, 894.74/236; aforementioned correspondence from DSNA 1940–44. Viola Smith’s feedback on reception from A.V. Smith, “Shortwave Broadcasts from the United States: Shanghai Reception Of KGEI,” 11 March 1941, 894.74/274, DSNA 1940–44.
40. For more on this general idea, see Divya C. McMillin, *International Media Studies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), esp. 140.
41. Clare Boothe, “U.S. General Stilwell Commands Chinese on Burma Front,” adapted from *Life*, 27 April 1942, accessed at <http://cbi-theater-2.home-cast.net/burmafront/burmafront.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010). Clare Boothe, better known as Clare Boothe Luce, was later married to the adamantly pro-Chinese *Time-Life* publisher Henry Luce.
42. “Mme. Chiang Declares China Is Not Afraid After She Sees Horrors of War in Shanghai,” 29 August, 1937, *New York Times*, 29 (article attributed to the Associated Press).
43. Hamilton to McDermott, 9 October 1941. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 15–16 (Alcott’s recollection of Horton’s comments quoted on p. 16). For the RCA-Victor and XMHA deal, see the A.V. Smith, “Radio Markets–China,” 15 August 1939, 38, 48.

44. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 238–39. See also Dong, *Shanghai 1842–1949*, 253–4.
45. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 238–44.
46. Paul French, the author of *Through the Looking Glass*, interviewed many of those surviving “Shanghailanders” who knew him in the process of completing his research, and shared with me the reputation Alcott had among his contemporaries in a personal email communication from 17 September 2010.
47. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 15–16, 18.
48. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 18–23. See also French, *Through the Looking Glass*, 199–200. The propaganda film referred to is Frank Capra’s “Know Your Enemy: Japan” (1945) and is discussed in John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 15–32. The quote from the film appears on page 19.
49. Craig Crawford, *Attack the Messenger: How Politicians Turn You Against The Media* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 127. See also interviews with Craig Crawford by MSNBC program hosts Keith Olbermann on 21 June 2006 and Joe Scarborough on 8 January 2007; transcripts available at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13459394/> and <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16541962/> (last accessed 26 September 2010).
50. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 22; Department of State to the British Embassy, “Problem of Controlling the Traffic in Opium and Other Narcotic Drugs in Parts of China Under Japanese Military Occupation,” 16 February 1939, with enclosure “Memorandum by the Department of State,” 14 January 1939, 893.114 Narcotics/2458, DSNA 1930–39, reprinted in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1939, Vol. 4, The Far East, the Near East and Africa* (Washington, DC: Government. Printing Office, 1955). 431.
51. Alcott’s series on drug trafficking appeared on the front page of the *China Press* on 4, 5, 6, and 7 December 1938. On the Japanese and Chinese involvement in the 1930s drug trade in China and the different levels of accountability to which China and Japan were held by Americans, see William O. Walker, *Opium and Foreign Policy: The Anglo-American Search for Order in Asia, 1912–1954* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 83–105, esp. 92–5, 104; For Alcott’s quote, see Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 22.
52. See Alcott, *My War With Japan* for Alcott’s differing treatments of the two assassinations (247–8), references to Japan’s “New Odor” (333–6), the request that Alcott “say something nice” (258–61), and Alcott’s involvement in the Settlement elections (318–22); the direct quote is from page 322. For the *Time* article, see “Newscaster of Shanghai.” For information on the political assassinations and the wider context that fueled them, see Wakeman, *Shanghai Badlands*, 17; and Coble, *Chinese Capitalists in Japan’s New Order*, 72.
53. Werner Gruhl, “The Great Asian-Pacific Crescent of Pain: Japan’s War from Manchuria to Hiroshima, 1931–1945,” in Peter Li, ed., *Japanese War Crimes: The Search for Justice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 249. The best-known example of those excesses is the Nanjing Massacre (frequently referred to as the “Rape of Nanjing”) when Japanese troops raped, plundered, and pillaged the civilian population of Nanjing following a more difficult than expected effort to capture the Chinese capital.

See Joshua A. Fogel, *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). For a broader critical look at Japanese policies and actions, particularly those of the Japanese army, see Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), esp. chap. 8, “The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: Liberation or Exploitation?,” 153–80. In this chapter, Ienaga recounts the frequency of rape, torture, involvement in the drug trade, use of forced labor, the plundering of agriculture and countless other atrocities throughout the Japanese occupied areas of East Asia. Warren Cohen refers to the “brutality” which the Japanese inflicted on “Chinese everywhere and describes some Japanese actions as “bordering on genocide.” Michael Barnhart notes that “Japan’s occupation of China was harsh.” Akira Iriye cites Imperial Army documents to demonstrate that the Japanese viewed themselves as the masters over inferior Chinese, who were “regarded...merely as objects of exploitation.” Walter LaFeber also notes the exploitive aspect of Japan’s occupation of China. Robert Smith Thomson cites Ambassador Joseph Grew’s speech to an audience that included influential Japanese economic and political leaders, warning of the deleterious effect that Japanese atrocities in China were having on American public opinion. The Japanese foreign minister, however, responded to the speech by insisting that Japanese policies would not change. See Warren Cohen, *East Asia at the Center: Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 352; Warren Cohen, *The Asian American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 12; Barnhart, *Japan and World*, 120; LaFeber, *The Clash*, 189; Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese American War, 1941–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 44; Robert Smith Thompson, *Empire’s on the Pacific: World War II and the Struggle for Mastery of Asia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 78–9.

54. The American Consul General in Tianjin John K. Caldwell to Hull, “Political Report for February 1941,” 893.00 PR Tientsin/153 (see also “Political Report for March 1941,” 10 April 1941, 893.00 PR Tientsin/155); American Consul General in Shanghai Frank Lockhart to Hull, “Political Report for December 1940,” 14 January 1941, 893.00 PR Shanghai/147; aforementioned documents from DSNA 1940–44. Additional information on the methods used to generate interference is from Alcott, 270–1 and “NCDN Plans Station to Counter Nazis’ Local ‘Lord Haw-Haw,’” *China Weekly Review*, 27 April 1940, 296–7.
55. For the establishment of the Broadcast Radio Supervisory Office, see Benson, “Back to Business as Usual,” 292. For the discovery of the source of XMHA’s interference, Alcott’s broadcast of it, and efforts to avoid the interference, see American Counsel in Shanghai Richard Butrick to Hull, 17 April 1940, includes attachment of letter from E.L. Healy to the United States Consulate General, 16 April 1940, 896.76/116, DSNA 1940–44; “Newscaster of Shanghai,” 29 July 1940, *Time*. For the meeting held with the Shanghai Municipal Police and the Japanese and confirmation that Japanese were indeed behind XMHA’s interference, see “Interference with Radio Station XMHA,” Shanghai Municipal Police Report by D.S.I. MacAdie, 23 December 1940, file D6813/14/X(17), SMP Records.
56. For Alcott’s rebuffing of the police request, see Carroll Alcott to the Assistant Commissioner of Police K.W. Yorke, 10 October 1940, and “Complaint

- Against Radio Station XMHA," report filed by Commissioner Bourne, 18 October 1940, file D6813/14/X(17), SMP Records. For Healy's account of the anonymous threat, see Police Report, by D.S.I.A. Taylor, 25 March 1941, file D6813/14/X(17), SMP Records
57. For Alcott's brush with the Japanese embassy officials, see Alcott 285–86; the Japanese reporter informing Alcott that there was no intention to kill him is noted on Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 295. See also "Newscaster of Shanghai," *Time*, 20 July 1940; Hallet Abend, "Shanghai Guards American Writers," *New York Times*, 21 July 1940, 19. See also "Radio and Asia," *Time*, 29 December 1941, accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,772937,00.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010).
 58. The reference to "deliberate interference by Japanese elements" is from "American Radio Station Here Protests Against Japanese Interference," 7 April 1940, *China Press*, copy of article preserved in file 6813/14/X(17), SMP Records. For a collection of articles from December 1940 saved by the Shanghai Municipal Police, see the clippings that follow "Interference with Radio Station XMHA," Police Report filed by D.S.I. MacAdie, 23 December 1940, file 6813/14/X(17), SMP Records; the articles and letters specifically quoted in this paragraph are from these same SMP Records: see "Radio Jamming: How to Circumvent" (writer's name illegible), 20 December 1940 and "A Fund Suggested" (signed D'Arnum), 21 December 1940, *North China Daily News* (the dates listed are those attached to the document, which may be a day or two off from the actual date the article was printed); "Broadcasting of Foreign-owned Radio Station Continuously Interfered With By Japanese," 17 December 1940, *Cheng Yien Pao [Zheng Yan Bao]*; "Interference with an American Radio Station," *Chinese-American Daily News*, n.d. [but probably from late December 1940].
 59. An estimate of "well over 250,000" listeners is from "Newscaster of Shanghai," *Time*, 29 July 1940. The estimate of 500,000 listeners is from Astrid Freyeisen, "XGRS–Shanghai Calling: Deutsche Rundfunkpropaganda in Ostasien während des Zweiten Weltkriegs," in *Rundfunk und Geschichte: Mitteilungen des Studienkreises Rundfunk und Geschichte Informationen aus dem Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv* 29, no. 1/2 (January/April 2003): 42. "The Shanghai Broadcasting Situation and Future Prospects (Editorial Correspondence)," *China Weekly Review*, 24 June 1939, 99. Reference to the "American School" petition is from Rena Krasno, *Stranger Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai* (Berkeley, CA: Pacific View Press, 1992), 139–40.
 60. Brown to Clausen, 23 June 1940, box 31, file 17, Velva Brown Papers. William Johnson never mentioned stations or personalities he listened to by name, but it is safe to conclude that he was listening to Alcott and XMHA's powerful signal when in one letter home he referenced listening to "American" news broadcast out of Shanghai from his outpost in the interior of central China; see W. Johnson letter [name of recipient is illegible], 27 November 1938, file 61, box 4, William R. Johnson Papers. See also Elleroy Smith diary entries from 12 January 1940 and 1 May 1941, file 1, box 197, Elleroy and Mabel Smith Papers. The James Halsema diary is posted on the website for the Center of East Asian Studies at the University of Kansas; see <http://www.ceas.ku.edu/publications/epp/Halsema%20Diary/jasc3.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010). Krasno, *Stranger Always*, 139–40.

61. Butrick to Hull, 17 April 1940; Butrick to the Japanese Consul General Yoshiaki Miura, 9 April 1940, 893.76/116; Butrick to Hull, "Political Report for April 1940, 9 May 1940, 893.00 P.R. Shanghai/139; Lockhart to the American Ambassador in China Nelson Johnson, "Political Report for December 1940," 14 January 1941, 893.00 PR Shanghai/147; Hamilton to McDermott, 17 October 1941, FW 893.76/141; all documents DSN 1940–44.
62. Benson, "Back to Business as Usual," 293, 297.
63. E.L. Healy's quote is from "French News Broadcast Daily from XMHA," police report by D.S.I. Logan, 9 December 1940, file 6813/14/X(17), SMP Records. For the reference to Alcott being "not very conciliatory" in his interview with the police, see Yorke to Bourne, 17 October 1940. In his own report on the subject, the Commissioner of Police, clearly having read Yorke's letter, used the identical phrase to describe Alcott. The reply to which both detectives refer is also contained in the same file on the same microfilm roll. See Carroll Alcott to assistant commissioner of police R.W. Yorke, 10 October 1940. All the above correspondence and other actions taken with regard to Alcott can be found in file 6813/14/X(17), RG 263, SMP Records. Commissioner Bourne subsequently alerted the Shanghai Municipal Council of Alcott's "not very conciliatory attitude" as well; see Bourne to the Secretary and Commissioner-General of the SMC G. Godfrey Phillips, 18 October 1941, p. 3, file U001-04-0002820 (Complaints Against Broadcasts), SMC Records. Extraterritoriality did not provide American expatriates the full protection of the Constitution (like guarantees of due process or trial by jury), but did provide for what the Supreme Court somewhat imprecisely claimed to be "fundamental rights" in an 1891 decision. See Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar*, esp. 87–8.
64. Krasno, *Stranger Always* 141–2.
65. James Halsema diary.
66. "Jap's Enemy No. 1," *Time*, 7 September 1942, accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,773509,00.html> (last accessed 26 September 2010); Powell recounts his experiences in Powell, *My Twenty-Five Years in China*, 370–404. On Powell's participation on the listening committee, see A.V. Smith to Gauss, 4 October 1939. On the Chinese subsidization of his anti-Japanese paper, see Wasserstein, *Secret War in Shanghai*, 63.
67. Alcott, *My War With Japan*, 342–4; "Newscaster of Shanghai," *Time*, 29 July 1940; "Radio and Asia," *Time*, 29 December 1941; "Who's a Phony," *Time*, 31 May 1943, accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,851715,00.html> (last accessed on 26 September 2010); "Commentator Carroll Alcott Dies at 64," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 May 1965, section b, 15.
68. A.V. Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 2 August 1937, file 544, "Radio-China-General, 1937–38," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914–58.
69. "Nippon Hoso Kyokai (The Broadcasting Corporation of Japan): Overseas Broadcast For North American, China, And The South Seas."

Conclusion

1. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, esp. 7; Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 15.

2. The American Trade Commissioner in Shanghai A. Viola Smith to the BFDC's Electrical Division, 20 September 1935, file 544, "Radio-China-1929-1936," box 2478, BFDC General Records 1914-58; on pre-World War 2 media theories, see Horten, *Radio Goes to War*, 63.
3. The American Embassy in Chongqing to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 27 January 1942, 893.76/ 127, DSN 1940-44.
4. Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 230, quoted in David Nye, *Technology Matters: Questions to Live With* (Cambridge, MA: 2006), 19; Steve Case (then CEO of AOL), "Internet's Reach Will Extend Our Grasp, Improve our Lives," in *USA Today*, 22 June 1999, section e, 4; Bill Clinton quoted in James C. Luh, "The Internet Can't Free China," *New York Times*, 25 July 2000, section a, 25.
5. On the number of Chinese Internet users, see Calum MacLeod, "China Vaults Past USA in Internet Users," *USA Today*, 21 April 2008, section a, 1; "210 million Internet users in China," in *People's Daily Online*, 21 January 1928, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90781/90877/6341926.html> (last accessed on 20 December 2010). For Chinese sabotage of American web-sites, see Elizabeth Becker, "F.B.I. Warns that Chinese May Disrupt U.S. Web Sites," *New York Times*, 28 April 2001. Chinese antagonism toward Western news media and especially CNN is addressed in David Eimer, "Chinese Anger with the West Spills on to the High Street: Pro-Tibet Demonstrations Have Dogged Olympic Torch Relays Around the World," *Sunday Telegraph* (London), 20 April 2008, 34. Japanese displeasure with CNN during the Persian Gulf War of 1990 is addressed in Purdy, "Information Imperialism" 321-5.
6. Nye, *Technology Matters*, 38.

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