
Courage under the Reign of Terror

Minnie Vautrin's Efforts in Protecting Women Refugees from Japanese Atrocities during the Nanjing Massacre

by

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Abstract: Nell'estate 1937 ebbe inizio la Seconda guerra Sino-giapponese. Mentre attraversavano la bassa valle dello Yangtze, le truppe giapponesi commisero atrocità che culminarono in dimensioni e crudeltà a Nanchino, dopo che la città fu conquistata e quando si verificarono in misura crescente esecuzioni di massa, stupri, saccheggi e incendi. Minnie Vautrin, una missionaria e insegnante americana nella città occupata, affrontò la situazione con grande coraggio. Il campus di Ginling, che essa dirigeva, venne trasformato in un centro di accoglienza per 10.000 donne e bambini che fuggivano terrorizzati e feroce loro cibo, riparo e protezione. Lavorò duramente e senza tregua, mettendo a rischio la sua stessa incolumità. Il suo coraggio nel regno del terrore fu tale che dopo la sua tragica morte fu ricordata come una divinità, la "dea" del massacro di Nanchino.

The Nanjing Massacre

A few weeks after the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) broke out near Beijing on July 7, 1937, hostilities spread down south to the Shanghai area. The August 9 Hongqiao Airfield Incident, in which two Japanese marines and one Chinese soldier were killed, built up tensions between the Chinese and Japanese. Alleging that Chinese snipers fired at Japanese patrols, the Japanese launched small-scaled attacks on Chinese positions on August 13 morning. Sporadic skirmishes then escalated to battles as both sides rushed in more reinforcements. The following days witnessed four Chinese divisions and several thousand Japanese marines engaged in street fighting in Shanghai.

At the first stage of the war, Chinese troops were largely on the offensive, launching attacks at Japanese positions with the intention of driving the Japanese out of Shanghai. However, the pressures upon Japanese marines were drastically relieved when two Japanese army divisions landed on August 23 near the Yangtze mouth north of Shanghai. The major part of Chinese troops rushed northward, attempting to keep the Japanese from landing. Thus, the focus of war was shifted to rural areas, with the Chinese on the defensive side.

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War continued for three months. Both sides fought ferociously, and sometimes, a town changed hands several times. Facing the better-equipped and better-trained Japanese army, the Chinese put up a stubborn resistance in spite of heavy casualties, defending their shrinking positions street by street and house by house, until early November when the Japanese landed several divisions of reinforcement both south and north of Shanghai. Chinese troops were forced to evacuate Shanghai. The city fell to the Japanese on November 12, 1937.

Miscommunications and poor organization resulted in chaos and even disastrous consequences during the hasty Chinese retreat westward, and consequently, the Chinese failed to set up any effective resistance west of Shanghai. The Japanese army took full advantage of the situation, swiftly chasing the fleeing Chinese troops and advancing toward Nanjing, China's national capital.

As they fought their way through the Yangtze valley, Japanese troops committed atrocities in the cities, towns and villages they had travelled through. Japanese soldiers slaughtered civilians indiscriminately, sought out women wherever possible to rape, burned houses, and looted at will.

Suzhou was captured on November 19. The following day, Japanese soldiers were witnessed to round up and execute 60 farmers in a small suburban village named Meixiang¹.

On November 22, Japanese troops marched into Wuxi. The following account describes what happened in a Wuxi suburban village on that day:

The hundred or more [Japanese] soldiers herded the thirty-eight people to that area and surrounded them. There were two young women in the group, one seventeen and unmarried, and the other pregnant. Both were taken to separate houses and raped by "devil" after another, an ordeal that left them too weak to stand.

Having raped the two women, the soldiers turned to arson and mass murder. Some soldiers dragged the two women back to the garden, while others took on the job of setting fire to all houses.

The soldiers rammed a broom into the vagina of the younger woman and then stabbed her with a bayonet. They cut open the belly of the pregnant woman and gouged out fetus.

Three men, unable to bear the sight of the flames consuming their homes, desperately broke through the ring of soldiers and headed off in the direction of the houses. They encountered some other soldiers who were determined not to let them through and forced them into one of the furiously burning houses. Seconds after the soldiers had locked the door from outside, the roof collapsed in flames on top of the men.

A two-year-old boy was bawling loudly in reaction to the noise and confusion. A soldier grabbed him from his mother's arms and threw him into the flames. They then bayoneted the hysterically sobbing mother and threw her into the creek. The remaining thirty-one people were made to kneel facing the creek. The soldiers stabbed them from behind with their bayonets, twisting the blades to disembowel them, and threw them into the water².

After Changzhou fell to the Japanese on November 29, an eighteen-year-old young man was captured by the Japanese and forced to go with them as a coolie to carry baggage. Thus, he was able to observe Japanese behaviors at a close range. At about the same time the young man was captured, the Japanese detained another

¹ H. Katsuichi, *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronting Japan's National Shame* (M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999), pp. 42-45.

² *Ivi*, pp. 63-65.

man in his forties. Japanese soldiers searched him for anything valuable before tossing him into the river and shooting him dead when he bobbed to the surface. In another instance, the soldiers kidnapped a young woman. They immediately took her to “a small pier along the riverbank, where the soldiers tried to strip off her clothes. She put up a determined resistance, but the soldiers eventually succeeded in stripping her naked as their comrades eating lunch nearby looked on, cheering and applauding. She tried to cover herself with a handkerchief, and while resisting the soldiers’ attempt to put it out of her hands, she fell into the river. The soldiers aimed at her head and shot her³.”

The most notorious atrocity case, however, was the “killing contest” between two Japanese sub-lieutenants, Mukai Toshiaki and Noda Tuyoshi, who competed with one another to see who would reach one hundred killings first. Consequently, from Changzhou to Nanjing, one killed 106 and the other 105⁴.

The invading Japanese troops reached the Nanjing gates on December 9, surrounding the city on three sides. Iwane Matsui, Japanese commander-in-chief, delivered an ultimatum to the Chinese, demanding an unconditional surrender. When Chinese commanding officer ignored the ultimatum, the Japanese launched the final assaults on the city. Nanjing was captured and brought under Japanese control on December 13, 1937.

As Japanese soldiers had done to the cities they had captured, they committed rampant atrocities in and around Nanjing on a scale unmatched by their previous records. It was documented by an American diplomat that

the Japanese soldiers swarmed over the city in thousands and committed untold depredations and atrocities. It would seem according to stories told us by foreign witnesses that the soldiers were let loose like a barbarian horde to desecrate the city. Men, women and children were killed in uncounted numbers throughout the city. Stories are heard of civilians being shot or bayoneted for no apparent reason⁵.

Japanese soldiers rounded up disarmed Chinese soldiers and civilians and mass executed them at the locations mainly along the Yangtze River outside the city walls. Some mass executions, which were comparatively smaller in scale, also took place inside the city. Miraculously, almost every mass execution had survivors who lived to tell their horrible experiences.

Wu Chang-teh, a policeman at the time, testified in the court of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo about his surviving experiences on December 15, 1937, outside one of Nanjing’s western gates:

These persons in groups of over one hundred at a time were forced to go through the gate at the point of bayonets. As they went outside they were shot with machine guns and their bodies fell along the slope and into the canal. Those who were not killed by the machine gun fire were stabbed with bayonets by the Japanese soldiers. About sixteen groups each containing more than 100 persons had been forced through the gate ahead of me and these persons were killed.

³ *Ivi*, p. 94.

⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 125-27.

⁵ J. Espy, “The Conditions at Nanking, January 1938,” January 25, 1938, p. 8, (Department of State File No. 793.94/12674), Microfilm Set M976, Roll 51, Record Group 59, the National Archives II, College Park, MD.

When my group of something over 100 was ordered to go through the gate I ran as fast as I could and fell forward just before the machine guns opened fire, and was not hit by machine gun bullets and a Japanese soldier came and stabbed the bayonet in my back. I lay still as if dead. The Japanese threw gasoline on some of the bodies and set them afire and left⁶.

John Gillespie Magee, an American missionary in Nanjing during the massacre period, recorded another mass execution survivor's story:

This man, Liu, Kwang-wei, an Inquirer in the Chinese Episcopal Church at Ssu Shou Ts'un, the model village at Hsiakwan, came into the Refugee Zone with fellow-Christians before the occupation of the city by the Japanese. On Dec. 16, he was carried off by Japanese soldiers with thirteen others of this Christian group. They were joined to another group of 1,000 men (according to his estimate), taken to the river bank at Hsiakwan, arranged in orderly lines near the Japanese wharf and mowed down with machine-guns. It was dusk but there was no chance to escape, as the river was behind them and they were surrounded on three sides by machine guns. This man was in the back immediately next to the water. When the lines of men began to fall he fell with them although uninjured. He dropped into shallow water and covered himself with the corpses of those about him. There he stayed for three hours, and was so cold when he came out that he could hardly walk. But he was able to make his way to a deserted hut where he found some bedding.⁷

Tang Shunshan, a shoemaker, told how he survived the most barbaric and gruesome decapitation massacre:

Four of the soldiers went around slicing off the heads of the people in their assigned group while the other four, including the collaborators, picked up the severed heads and lined them up. In other words, the four teams were having a head cutting contest.

The three rows of victims were made to kneel facing away from the pit. Tang was at the end of the last row of his group, the row closest to the pit. The soldier began cutting heads on the east end of the front row. Some of the people were crying and screaming, while others were too frightened to move. As each head was cut off, blood spurted up and the body fell over. The heads were lined up in back.

The seventh and last person in the first row was a pregnant woman. The soldier thought he might as well rape her before killing her, so he pulled her out of the group to a spot about ten meters away. As he was trying to rape her, the woman resisted fiercely, shouting "Dadao Riben diguozhuyi!" (Down with Japanese imperialism!) The soldier abruptly stabbed her in the belly with a bayonet. She gave a final scream as her intestines spilled out. Then the soldier stabbed the fetus, with its umbilical cord clearly visible, and tossed aside.

The eighth person was a man on the west end of the second row, or directly in front of Tang. The minute his head was cut off, his body fell backwards, knocking Tang into the pit like a domino. He has vague memories of his head being covered by the clothing of headless bodies, but he lost consciousness at that point. He now thinks that he must have passed out from sheer terror.

When he came to, he was in an air-raid shelter, being tended by a friend. This friend had been watching the entire horrific scene from inside a house on the grounds of the clothing factory, and he explained that after the massacre was over, the Japanese had thrown the bodies into the pit, all the while walking around and bayoneting bodies they thought were showing some sign of life. While unconscious, Tang was stabbed in five places – his back, his left arm, two places in his left leg, and in his left thigh – but he did not feel a thing. After the Japanese left,

⁶ Wu Chang Teh, Testimony at the Court of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, in *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial, Vol. II, Tribunal Proceedings*, ed. by R. John Pritchard and Sonia Magbanua Zaide, Garland Publishing Inc., New York 1981, p. 2, 605.

⁷ J. G. Magee, Case 3, Film 2, Folder 7, Box 263, Record Group 8, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

the friend went to take a look. It was at that point that Tang moved slightly, and his friend did not recognize him until he had washed the blood off⁸.

According to the judgment reached by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo in 1948, it was estimated that “the total number of civilians and prisoners of war murdered in Nanking and its vicinity during the first six weeks of the Japanese occupation was over 200,000,” and the number is not exaggerated due to the fact that “burial societies and other organizations counted more than 155,000 bodies which they buried,” though these “figures do not take into account those persons whose bodies were destroyed by burning or by throwing them into the Yangtze River or otherwise disposed of by the Japanese⁹.”

Aside from wanton killings, the Japanese indulged themselves in looting, as well. They snatched away anything they could lay their hands on, and robbed houses, buildings, and compounds of the materials and objects of values, be they as small as coppers, silver coins, and small-sized valuables that could be pocketed away, or as big as furniture, pianos, cars or large quantities of commodities from stores and warehouses. There was not a store that remained undamaged, and many stores were thoroughly plundered by Japanese soldiers with trucks¹⁰.

In Nanjing, there was not a house or building that was not entered, ransacked, and looted by the Japanese. James Espy, a U.S. vice consul who arrived in Nanjing on January 6, 1938, described the conditions in Nanjing concerning looting:

Whether the compound, house, shop or building be that of a foreign mission or that of a foreign or Chinese national, all have been entered without discrimination and to a greater or less degree ransacked and looted. The American, British, German and French Embassies are known to have been entered and articles taken therefrom. It has also been reported that the same thing has occurred to the Italian Embassy. The Russian Embassy on January 1st was mysteriously gutted by fire. Without exception, every piece of American property inspected by us or reported upon by the American residents has been entered by Japanese soldiers, frequently time and time again. This has occurred even to the residences in which the Americans are still living. These American residents and the other members of the International Committee have been and up to the time of this report still are constantly driving Japanese soldiers out of foreign properties who have entered in search of loot or women¹¹.

If the wanton killings and rampant looting increasingly intensified the reign of terror hung over Nanjing, widespread burning caused the most visible physical damage and destruction to China's former capital. Ravages by burning were rampant and spread out to every corner of the city. In some cases, the Japanese

⁸ H. Katsuichi, *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronting Japan's National Shame*, pp. 164-165. The survivor's name, according to the Chinese original, should be “Tang Shunshan (唐顺山),” rather than “Tang Junshan” in Katsuichi's book. Tang Shunshan's witness account is also included in *侵华日军南京大屠杀幸存者证言集*, 朱成山主编, 南京: 南京大学出版社, 1994 (*A Collection of Survivors' Witness Accounts about the Nanjing Massacre Perpetrated by the Invading Japanese Troops*, ed. by Zhu Chengshan, Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1994), pp. 71-73.

⁹ R. J. Pritchard – S. M. Zaide, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial, Vol. XX Judgment and Annexes*, Garland Publishing Inc., New York 1981, p. 49, 608.

¹⁰ M. S. Bates, A letter to his wife Lilliath, January 9, 1938, Folder 8, Box 1, Record Group 10, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

¹¹ J. Espy, “The Conditions at Nanking, January 1938,” January 25, 1938, pp. 10-11.

military used trucks to empty shops and stores in the business districts of their commodities, and then set the stores on fire to cover their lootings. According to Espy,

burning through arson or otherwise has been committed at random throughout the city. On many streets there are found houses and buildings that are burnt down, intermittently among others that were not burnt at all. A street will have one, two or more buildings with only charred walls standing while the rest of the buildings along it have not been touched by fire.

The southern end of the city has suffered the worst of the ravages by fire. An inspection of that part of Nanking where the business and commercial section of the city is located showed block after block of burnt out buildings and houses. Many blocks are left with only a dozen or less buildings still standing. Instead of the nearly complete destruction by fire of the entire section of the city such as occurred to Chapei¹² in Shanghai it could be seen that usually just the buildings facing onto the main streets were destroyed while the structures behind had mainly not been burnt¹³.

Lewis Strong Casey Smythe, an American professor at the University of Nanking, indicated that in the month following Japanese occupation, Japanese soldiers “burned over three-fourths of the stores in town (all the large ones, only some small ones remaining), and all of them were completely looted. Now they are hauling all the loot and wrecked cars etc., out on the railway to Japan¹⁴.”

James Henry McCallum, an American missionary working for the University of Nanking Hospital, estimated the destruction of the city caused by burning that from “the Hospital to Chung Che and Peh Hsia Rds. about 30 percent; about half on Peh Hsia Rd; on Chung Hwa Rd. to Chein Kang Rd. about 80 percent – beyond there, less and not a great deal burned out in the extreme southern part,” while “from S. Kulou towards the East Wall about 20 or 30 percent concentrated in certain areas¹⁵.”

Atrocities against Women

Violation of women was appalling and rampant. Japanese soldiers were turned loose to seek out women wherever they could be found to rape them. Young girls as tender as 11 years old and old women in their sixties or even older fell victims to Japanese soldiers’ uncontrolled lust. In some cases, women were killed after being raped. Family members were murdered while attempting to protect victims from assaults. The judgment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East gives a concise summary in that regard:

There were many cases of rape. Death was frequent penalty for the slightest resistance on the part of a victim or the members of her family who sought to protect her. Even girls of tender years and old women were raped in large numbers throughout the city, and many cases of abnormal and sadistic behavior in connection with these rapings occurred. Many women were

¹² Chapel (Zhabei, 闸北), a district in Shanghai which was badly shelled and burned down when the Sino-Japanese hostilities broke out in August 1937.

¹³ J. Espy, “The Conditions at Nanking, January 1938,” January 25, 1938, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴ L. S. C. Smythe, A letter to friends, March 8, 1938, Correspondence of Lewis S. C. and Margaret Garrett Smythe, Disciples of Christ Historical Society Library, Nashville, TN.

¹⁵ J. H. McCallum, A letter to his wife Eva, January 1, 1938, *Account of the Japanese Atrocities at Nanking during the Winter of 1937 - 38*, The Library of Congress.

killed after the act and their bodies mutilated. Approximately 20,000 cases of rape occurred within the city during the first month of the occupation¹⁶.

Under Japanese occupation, daily life was a hell for women. According to Smythe's estimate, at the peak of disorder,

there must have been over 1,000 women raped every night and on those two days, probably as many by day, in the Safety Zone! Any young women and a few old women were susceptible if caught. Pastors wives, university instructor's wives, any one with no distinction of person, only that the prettier ones were preferred. The highest record is that one woman was raped by 17 soldiers in order at the Seminary! In America people used to mention "rape" in a whisper. It is our daily bread here almost! Stories poured in so rapidly and so hard to keep up with, that I began taking them down in short-hand at the table¹⁷.

Wilson Plumer Mills, an American missionary who stayed in Nanjing, described the sufferings, horror, and agony of the women in the city: "your hearts would have been wrung as were ours had you seen some of the early morning crowds of women fleeing from one place to some other where they thought they would be a little safer than they had been from the terror that was theirs the night before. Literally thousands of cases of rape have occurred¹⁸."

The most bloody and barbaric rape and murder case was recorded by Rev. Magee who filmed the case with a 16 mm movie camera. To illustrate the footage, he provided a written description:

On December 13, about thirty soldiers came to a Chinese house at #5 Hsing Lu Kao in the southeastern part of Nanking, and demanded entrance. The door was opened by the landlord, Mohammedan named Ha. They killed him immediately with a revolver and also Mr. Hsia, who knelt before them after Ha's death, begging them not to kill anyone else. Mrs. Ha asked them why they had killed her husband and they shot her dead. Mrs. Hsia was dragged out from under a table in the guest hall where she had tried to hide with her one-year old baby. After being stripped and raped by one or more men, she was bayoneted in the chest, and then had a bottle thrust into her vagina, the baby being killed with a bayonet. Some soldiers then went to the next room where were Mrs. Hsia's parents, aged 76 and 74, and her two daughters aged 16 and 14. They were about to rape the girls when the grandmother tried to protect them. The soldiers killed her with a revolver. The grandfather grasped the body of his wife and was killed. The two girls were then stripped, the older being raped by 2 - 3 men, and the younger by 3. The older girl was stabbed afterwards and a cane was rammed into her vagina. The younger girl was bayoneted also but was spared the horrible treatment that had been meted out to her sister and her mother. The soldiers then bayoneted another sister of between 7 - 8, who was also in the room. The last murders in the house were of Ha's two children, aged 4 and 2 years respectively. The older was bayoneted and the younger split down through the head with a sword. After being wounded the 8-year old girl crawled to the next room where lay the body of her mother. Here she stayed for 14 days with her 4-year old sister who had escaped unharmed. The two children lived on puffed rice and the rice crusts that form in the pan when the rice is cooked. It was from the older of these children that the photographer was able to get part of the story, and verify and correct certain details told him by a neighbor

¹⁶ R. J. Pritchard – S. M. Zaide, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial, Vol. XX Judgment and Annexes*, pp. 49,605 - 49,606.

¹⁷ L. S. C. Smythe, A letter to his wife Margaret (Mardie), Chicks and Folks, December 21, 1937, Box 103, Record Group 8, Special Collection, Yale University Divinity School Library.

¹⁸ W. P. Mills, A letter to his wife Nina, January 10, 1938, Box 141, Record Group 8, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

and a relative. The child said the soldiers came every day taking things from the house; but the two children were not discovered as they hid under some old sheets¹⁹.

George Ashmore Fitch, a YMCA worker in Nanjing, recorded numerous rape cases in his diaries. In the December 17, 1937, entry, he indicated that a “rough estimate would be at least a thousand women raped last night and during the day. One poor woman was raped thirty-seven times. Another had her five months infant deliberately smothered by the brute to stop its crying while he raped her. Resistance means the bayonet²⁰.” On December 18, he reported that two women, one of whom was a cousin of a YMCA secretary, were raped by the Japanese in the house of Charles Henry Riggs, a fellow American on the University of Nanking faculty, when

Riggs was having dinner with Fitch and other Americans²¹. Rape took place again in Riggs’ house on December 22. “In the evening I walked home with Riggs after dinner – a woman of 54 had been raped in his house just before our arrival²².” Fitch recorded on 1937 Christmas Day that “seven soldiers spent that night and the night before in the Bible Teachers’ Training School and raped women, a girl of twelve was raped by three soldiers almost next door to us and another of thirteen²³.” On December 27, Fitch wrote that a “car with an officer and two soldiers came to the University last night, raped three women on the premises and took away one with them. The Bible Teachers’ Training School was entered many times, people were robbed and twenty women were raped²⁴.”

In a letter dated April 2, 1938, Rev. Magee indicated that

I took another little girl of fifteen years old to the hospital who told me her story. Her old brother, brother’s wife, older sister and father and mother were all killed with the bayonet before her face and then she was carried off to some barracks where there were some 200 to 300 soldiers. She was kept in a room and her clothes taken away and there raped a number of times daily for about a month and a half when she took sick and they were afraid to use her. She told me that there were a number of other girls held there in the same way as herself. I have talked to an old lady of 76 who was raped twice. Her daughter, a widow was raped between 18 and 19 times, she is not sure which. This is the oldest case I personally know about but a Bible woman told me of a woman of 81 with whom she was living and who was told to open her clothes. She said she was too old and the man shot her dead. I have taken

¹⁹ J. G. Magee, Case 9, Film 4, Folder 7, Box 263, Record Group 8, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²⁰ G. A. Fitch, Diaries, December 17, 1937, Folder 202, Box 9, Record Group 11, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²¹ G. A. Fitch, Diaries, December 18, 1937, Folder 202, Box 9, Record Group 11, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²² G. A. Fitch, Diaries, December 22, 1937, Folder 202, Box 9, Record Group 11, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²³ G. A. Fitch, Diaries, 1937 Christmas Day, Folder 202, Box 9, Record Group 11, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²⁴ G. A. Fitch, Diaries, December 27, 1937, Folder 202, Box 9, Record Group 11, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

carload after carload of women in our Mission Ford to the hospital to be treated after rape, the youngest being a girl of ten or eleven years²⁵.

Miner Searle Bates, another American professor on the University of Nanjing faculty, listed a series of rape cases in a letter to his wife that he had “full details of over 20 cases of rape per day,” including one “woman of 72 from Middle School was raped last night” and two “girls from the University were killed the first night of return to their home, when they refused soldiers’ demands. And so on for a long series every day! There are not a few hideous cases of sadism, but it’s mostly plain animal lust and violence²⁶.”

Having seen so many terrible rape cases, Ernest Herman Forster, who was an American missionary associated with the American Church Mission, told his family that “Cases of rape are daily occurrences, and the treatment given some of the women who were carried off by the soldiers is too terrible to tell²⁷.” He indicated that “It hardly seems possible that such human devils were in existence. But instance after instance can be mentioned²⁸.”

Minnie Vautrin, an American Missionary Educator in Nanjing

When Nanjing was under siege and succumbed to Japanese atrocities, there were altogether twenty-seven Westerners who chose to stay inside the city walls. After five American and British journalists left for Shanghai on December 15 and 16, 1937, the remaining twenty-two Westerners dedicated themselves to establishing and managing the Safety Zone in the city with the hope that the Safety Zone would shelter Chinese refugees and protect them from Japanese atrocities. Of the twenty-two, there were fourteen Americans, namely, Bates, Riggs, and Smythe of the University of Nanking; Robert Ory Wilson, Clifford Sharp Trimmer, Grace Louise Bauer, and Iva M. Hynds of the University Hospital; Forster and Magee of the American Church Mission; Mills of Northern Presbyterian Mission; McCallum of the United Christian Missionary Society (Disciples of Christ); Hubert Lafayette Sone of Nanking Theological Seminary; and Minnie Vautrin of Ginling College²⁹.

The Americans were involved either in setting up refugee camps in the Safety Zone, or working in the hospital to take care of the sick and wounded. Vautrin worked diligently and endeavored to turn Ginling College campus into the refugee center for women and children.

²⁵ J. G. Magee, a letter to Rev. J. C. McKim, April 2, 1938, Folder 62, Box 4, Record Group 10, Special Collection, Yale University Divinity School Library.

²⁶ M. S. Bates, A letter to his wife Lilliath, February 3, 1938, Folder 8, Box 1, Record Group 10, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²⁷ E. H. Forster, A letter to his wife Clarissa, January 28, 1938, Folder 5, Box 263, Record Group 8, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²⁸ E. H. Forster, A letter to his wife Clarissa, January 24, 1938, Folder 5, Box 263, Record Group 8, Special Collection, Yale Divinity School Library.

²⁹ S. Lu, *They Were in Nanjing: The Nanjing Massacre Witnessed by American and British Nationals*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong 2004, pp. 14-15.

Vautrin was born in Secor, Illinois, a typical Midwest rural settlement, on September 27, 1886. Although she never traveled farther than 100 miles from her hometown before the age of twenty-six, she courageously answered her church's call and went to China to be a girls' Christian school headmaster and teacher in Hefei, Anhui Province, right after she graduated from the University of Illinois in 1912. After five years' excellent service at the girls' school and earning M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University, Vautrin was invited by Ginling College in 1919 to join its faculty.

Established in 1915 as an American Christian school, Ginling College was the first higher education institution that offered baccalaureate degrees to women in China. The president of Ginling College, Matilda S. Thurston, who was better known as Mrs. Laurence Thurston, left for the United States in 1919 for fundraising. Vautrin filled the vacancy by being the acting president for 18 months when Mrs. Thurston was absent.

As a complete stranger to Ginling College, Vautrin did a splendid job in adjusting to her role as the acting president, especially taking into account that, apart from administrative responsibilities and academic curriculum, she was heavily involved in planning the college's new campus, including negotiations of purchasing land piece by piece, as well as dealing with student strikes fueled by the May Fourth Movement³⁰.

Meanwhile, she took the initiative of organizing the Education Department, a new department for the college³¹. She worked hard to obtain funds, so as to be able to add new teachers and courses. When President Thurston returned to Ginling, Vautrin's responsibilities shifted chiefly to the administration and teaching in the Education Department.

Vautrin was an excellent teacher. She understood the importance of keeping the balance between the professional training in teaching method and the mastery of the subjects the students were going to teach. Over the years, she attracted a large number of students into the courses offered by the Education Department. The students benefited from the courses by learning not only the teaching method but also the confidence they needed for their future career³².

She knew very well the importance of teaching practice in preparing her students for their future. In 1924, she established the Practice School on Ginling campus affiliated with the Education Department. The Practice School provided a convenient training base for her students who could have hands-on experience and learn skills before they assumed their teaching role in the real world³³.

Based on her own experiences in the girls' school in Hefei, Vautrin understood perfectly what problems a teacher might face. She constantly visited schools in different regions to acquaint herself with the places and environments to which her

³⁰ M. S. (Caldar) Thurston – R. M. Chester, *Ginling College*, United Board for Christian Colleges in China, New York 1955, p. 33.

³¹ *Ivi*, p. 32.

³² *Ivi*, pp. 32-33.

³³ *Ivi*, p. 33.

students would go after they graduated from Ginling. This way, she could have her students better prepared academically and spiritually³⁴.

Vautrin paid attention to cultivate a friendly relationship between Ginling College and its neighbors. From time to time, she would visit people in the neighboring areas, not only to get to know residents, but also help them with the resources available. Her blue collar family background enabled her to work well with poor residents, and earn their trust and respect. As danger approached when Japanese troops reached the city gates, she first invited women and children, as well as several families, in the neighborhood to live on campus for safety. In turn, many of the neighbors helped her maintain and operate Ginling refugee camp.

Vautrin was an excellent educator and administrator, but she was a good missionary, as well. Her strong Christian faith gave her strength and confidence under adverse conditions, and helped her overcome difficulties and solve problems. As a mission institution, Ginling College gave its students more than an academic education³⁵. It was an institution of higher learning for educating “keen and selfless Christian leaders for China’s emerging womanhood³⁶.” Apart from regular religious education and weekly service offered to students, professors influenced their students with their own personalities and encouraged them to serve others and help the poor both materially and spiritually. Vautrin encouraged her students to help people in the neighboring areas. Their religious faith and sense of duty led them to establish a neighborhood school to offer poor residents an education opportunity they would not have otherwise. She often taught Sunday school there. As time went on, the neighborhood school served as a communication hub between Ginling and its neighbors.

After Ginling College was transformed into a refugee camp, Vautrin did not forget her missionary duty. She organized Bible study programs for women and girls regularly for a period of six weeks. The program was eagerly welcomed and well attended. The Ginling refugee camp provided them with food, shelter, education, and spiritual comfort.

Ginling Refugee Camp for Women and Children

The most courageous and memorable contribution Vautrin made during her tenure in China was undoubtedly the refugee camp she established on Ginling campus, which sheltered and protected over ten thousand women and children during the worst weeks after the Japanese captured Nanjing and slaughtered thousands upon thousands of disarmed Chinese soldiers and civilian residents.

After learning that the war broke out in North China, Vautrin, who was vacationing in Qingdao, a coastal resort city several hundred miles north of Nanjing, immediately returned to Nanjing. She was subconsciously worried about what was in store for the coming new school year. When hostilities spread to

³⁴ *Ibidem*

³⁵ B. Ching-yi Wu, *East Meets West*, R.C. Huang, Baltimore, Md 1985, p. 55.

³⁶ M. Vautrin, “Sharing ‘Abundant Life in a Refugee Camp,’” Writings, Minnie Vautrin Papers, Box 1, Disciples of Christ Historical Society Library, Nashville, TN.

Shanghai, the Ministry of Education advised higher education institutions in Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou and surrounding areas to postpone the school opening to September 20³⁷. As the war continued and the situation worsened, it was obvious that the postponement would be indefinite, and what was worse was that the universities, colleges, research institutions in the coastal areas had to be relocated to interior regions. After several rounds of debate and discussion, it was decided that Ginling College was to split into three units for relocation in Shanghai, Wuchang in Hubei Province, and Chengdu in Sichuan Province. As the war advanced and the Japanese occupied more territories, Shanghai and Wuchang units eventually joined Chengdu unit. There were only a handful of Ginling faculty and staff members who remained in Nanjing to safeguard the buildings, equipments, furniture, and books on campus.

With the Japanese getting closer to Nanjing, the Westerners in the city proposed to establish the Nanjing Safety Zone to provide shelter for Chinese refugees when hostilities reached Nanjing. Universities, schools, government institutions, and other public buildings within the zone were chosen as the sites to set up refugee camps. Ginling College was within the boundaries of the Safety Zone, and it would be turned into the refugee center solely for women and children.

On December 2, 1937, Yifang Wu, president of Ginling College at the time, departed for Wuchang, leaving the college in the charge of Vautrin and several others who formed an emergency committee. Vautrin and her staff lost no time in organizing and rearranging the campus in preparation for refugees to move in. They had six buildings cleaned and furniture moved out.

When Japanese troops were at the city gates, the damage to houses by fire or shelling, as well as dangerous war situation forced many people to leave their homes and flock into the city for shelter. Ginling opened its door to refugees as early as December 8. Three hundred women and children moved in on the first day, and the number increased drastically thereafter. After the Japanese entered the city on December 13 and started killing, raping, looting and burning, terror-stricken women swarmed in until all the buildings were full. Even attics, hallways, lobbies, and stairs were packed with people. Eventually, verandahs and covered walkways were full. Refugees were content to be allowed to get into Ginling, even if they had to sleep in open air, because it was too horrible and dangerous to live outside the Safety Zone.

Every morning, Vautrin would stand at the college's front gate from early hours, checking in large crowds of women whose previous night experiences were horrible beyond words. She kept a vivid account of that unforgettable scene:

we began to realize the terrible danger to women if they remained in their own homes, for soldiers were wild in their search for young girls, and so we flung our gates open and in they streamed. For the next few days as conditions for them grew worse and worse, they streamed in from daylight on. Never shall I forget the faces of the young girls as they streamed in -- most of them parting from their fathers or husbands at the gate. They had disguised themselves in every possible way -- many had cut their hair, most of them had blackened their faces, many were wearing men or boy's clothes or those of old women. Mr. Wang, Mr. Hsia,

³⁷M. S. (Caldar) Thurston – R. M. Chester, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

Mary and I spent our days at the gate trying to keep idlers out and let the women come in. At our peak load we must have had ten thousand on the campus³⁸.

Providing shelter for ten thousand women undoubtedly posed a daunting task. However, protecting women refugees from Japanese atrocities proved to be more challenging. Due to the fact that Japanese soldiers were turned loose and would kill any Chinese, men or women, old or young, if they displayed signs of disapproval or resistance. Chinese staff members could not do anything effective to prevent the Japanese from harming women. On the occasion when Japanese soldiers entered the campus to abduct women, Chinese staff members could do no more than reporting it to Vautrin, who would run immediately to the spot to drive the soldiers out. In those days, whether she was at the dinner table or took a nap, whenever or wherever she received an urgent call, she responded instantly. She was constantly seen running from one place to another across the campus to keep Japanese soldiers out.

Under the circumstances, it was soon discovered that a Caucasian face worked most effectively to drive out Japanese soldiers, Vautrin and Mary Twinem, an instructor from the University of Nanking who, originally an American national, was a naturalized Chinese citizen, could not leave Ginling campus at the same time. One of them had to stay on campus to run the errands of keeping Japanese soldiers from entering the college³⁹.

However, the Caucasian face did not always work. On December 17, 1937, Japanese troops broke into Ginling, demanding to search buildings, which were packed with refugee women, ostensibly for Chinese soldiers. But their true intention was to search for young women for abduction and violation. When Vautrin refused to unlock the door to one of the buildings, she was slapped by a Japanese soldier. She gave a detailed description in her December 17 diary entry:

As we finished eating supper, the boy from Central Building came and said there were many soldiers on campus going to dormitories. I found two in front of Central Building pulling on door and insisting on its being opened. I said I had no key. One said – “Soldiers here. Enemy of Japan.” I said – “No Chinese soldiers.” Mr. Li, who was with me, said the same. He then slapped me on the face and slapped Mr. Li very severely, and insisted on opening of door. I pointed to side door and took them in. They went through both downstairs and up presumably looking for Chinese soldiers. When we came out two more soldiers came leading three of our servants, whom they had bound. They said “Chinese soldiers,” but I said, “No soldiers. Coolie, gardener,” – for that is what they were. They took them to the front and I accompanied them. When I got to the front gate I found a large group of Chinese kneeling there beside the road – Mr. F. Chen, Mr. Hsia and a number of our servants. The sergeant of the group was there, and some of his men, and soon we were joined by Mrs. Tsen and Mary Twinem, also being escorted by soldiers. They asked who was master of the institution, and I said I was. Then they made me identify each person⁴⁰.

³⁸ M. Vautrin, “A Review of the First Month,” in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937-38*, ed. by S. Lu, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL 2008, pp. 146-147.

³⁹ S. Lu, Introduction to *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937-38*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

⁴⁰ M. Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 84.

Eventually, while the Japanese kept Vautrin and her staff at the front gate, the mock search for Chinese soldiers ended with abduction of twelve young girls from Ginling.

Japanese soldiers kept on coming to Ginling. They attempted to do so in every possible way, whether through gates or by getting over the walls or fences, with the purpose of either abducting women to rape or committing looting. On December 19, Vautrin answered many alert calls, running continuously from place to place, building to building. At old Faculty House, she found in Room 538 one Japanese soldier standing at the door, while another was raping a poor girl inside the room. She chased both soldiers away. On another occasion, she hurried to the spot north of the library where she caught a Japanese soldier abducting a girl to a bamboo grove⁴¹.

On December 23, Vautrin filed a protest to the Japanese Embassy that

Three large American owned teacher's residences, clearly marked by American flags and proclamations issued by the American Embassy have been searched repeatedly and looted by different groups of soldiers. Since the owners of the contents of these houses are not in Nanking I cannot make an accurate statement of the extent of the losses. Usually when I have appeared on the scene and have told the soldiers that it is American property the looting has stopped although in two cases the soldiers continued to loot in my presence⁴².

On January 21, 1938, she reported to the American Embassy official:

It seems best to report to you an incident which happened on Ginling College property today at about two o'clock this afternoon. The place where it happened has a college fence on only one side but above it there is an American flag.

On our land but in the place mentioned there are several small huts of refugees. Four soldiers came and were trying to drag off three girls living in these huts. The girls succeeded in running toward our back gate and fortunately I appeared on the scene and the soldiers seeing me immediately left⁴³.

Day in and day out, from early morning to night, Vautrin worked extremely hard, doing her best to protect refugees on Ginling campus under difficult and, sometimes, even dangerous circumstances. During the most dangerous massacre period, each day, she would spend most of her time standing on guard at college's front gate to keep Japanese soldiers from entering the campus. Each day, at her invitation, a male American missionary would come to Ginling for the night to help guard the campus. She also had her workers patrolling the campus day and night. If anything happened, the workers would report to her. As late as March 8, 1938, she accepted two to three hundred women and girls into Ginling campus, because Japanese soldiers "were reported to be making a house to house search in the

⁴¹ S. Lu, *They Were in Nanjing*, cit., pp. 162-163.

⁴² M. Vautrin, A protest letter to M. Tanaka, December 23, 1937, Enclosure 2-A to James Espy's report "Conditions of American Property and Interest in Nanking," February 28, 1938, (Department of State File No. 393.115/233), Box 1821, 1931-1939 Central Decimal File, Record Group 59, the National Archives II, College Park, MD.

⁴³ M. Vautrin, A letter to John M. Allison, Enclosure 2-C to James Espy's report "Conditions of American Property and Interest in Nanking," February 28, 1938, (Department of State File No. 393.115/233), Box 1821, 1931-1939 Central Decimal File, Record Group 59, the National Archives II, College Park, MD.

neighborhood, looking for money and demanding ‘hwa gu-niang’⁴⁴ and people were frightened⁴⁵.”

In addition to providing lodging for women refugees and protecting them against Japanese atrocities, Minnie paid close attention to the living conditions in the refugee center. Ginling refugee center made arrangement to provide food through the Red Cross rice kitchen on campus. Food was free for destitute residents, and those who could afford it were charged a small amount of money.

Maintaining the living quarters for ten thousand women rendered a huge sanitation challenge. Vautrin and her staff worked hard to keep buildings sanitary with means available, as well as through educating women about public health and hygiene. She also decided to open a public bath house on campus for women, which was greatly appreciated by the refugees, for it offered them convenience and improved their life in terms of personal hygiene at the time of crisis.

Ginling refugee center had a small clinic in place, as well. Vautrin’s colleague and assistant, Mrs. Tsen, was in charge of the clinic, which, in addition to providing basic medical care and medicine, distributed powder milk and cod liver oil to babies and children regularly in the camp, and coordinated vaccination of two thousand refugees⁴⁶.

Another important project Vautrin initiated for women was to collect data and file petitions for those women whose husbands and sons were taken away by the Japanese during the first few weeks after Nanjing fell and never returned since. Many of the women had two sons missing, and one woman even lost four sons and a brother-in-law. Quite a few of the missing male family members were bread-earners for the families. Consequently, the women were left without life support resources. From January 24 to February 8, 1938, 738 women provided data, and 1,245 women signed the petition from March 18 to 22, 1938⁴⁷. Ginling refugee center submitted the data and petition to the Japanese authorities, but no action was taken by the Japanese and nothing was ever heard about the petition, despite repeated urging by Vautrin and her staff. Apparently, the majority of these missing persons were slaughtered.

Since many of the women lost income sources, and housewives did not have the necessary skills to make a living either, Vautrin started a project to give small sum loans to those who had no income sources, and opened survival skill classes, homecraft courses, for those who needed the skill to start over their life. Both projects proved to be successful and extremely helpful for those destitute women.

Vautrin’s refugee center provided women with the opportunity of Christian education, as well. She felt that “Suffering and terror and destruction have made

⁴⁴ The transliteration of a Chinese phrase which means “young and pretty girls.”

⁴⁵ M. Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 179.

⁴⁶ M. Vautrin, “A Review of the Period January 14-March 31, 1938,” in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 198.

⁴⁷ S. Lu, Introduction to *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. xxvi.

hearts tender and in need of sympathy and comfort⁴⁸.” She hoped that Bible learning and singing hymns would strengthen women refugees and “comfort them during the days of strain and stress⁴⁹.” With the assistance of the American Church Mission, Ginling refugee camp started having regular evangelistic meetings for the women refugees on campus on January 17, 1938. Because there were thousands of women refugees living in six big buildings, Vautrin and her workers developed a ticket system so that each and every woman had an opportunity to hear the gospel once a week. Each afternoon in a small chapel, about 170 women listened intently to the speaker and learned to sing the hymn. Consequently, more than 1,000 women had the opportunity to hear each week⁵⁰.

Vautrin was extremely enthusiastic about the religious study program and was overjoyed at its success:

For the six weeks before Holy Week, between 600 and 1,000 were enrolled in classes studying the Life of Christ. Those classes met three times each week and were definitely planned to prepare the young women to understand the great message of Holy Week and Easter. Not only did they study the life of Christ but five afternoons a week there was a preaching service using the teachings of Jesus as themes. There was a wonderful responsiveness to the carefully prepared messages of those weeks. Suffering, sorrow, having life shorn of all but the absolute necessities, had made hearts tender and had prepared them to understand the suffering of God in Christ for the sins of humankind⁵¹.

She also ordered printed studying materials from Shanghai and organized Bible study classes for women. Due to the different literacy levels of the women, she arranged to have several grades of class to suit their needs and capabilities⁵². She worked determinedly and efficiently to accommodate the various needs of the refugees.

In spite of the fact that she was extremely busy, and every day of her life was occupied with various issues which required her attention, decisions, and reactions, Vautrin managed to find time to write her diaries, which were faithfully kept on a daily basis. The day-to-day accounts of her diaries were valuable in that they keep a written record of what had happened on Ginling campus and in the city. They offer the readers of later generations an opportunity to experience and examine, at a close range, the human sufferings under horrible circumstances.

Her diaries lead readers to two ponds in a valley not far from Ginling campus. At the edge of the ponds, scores of black charred bodies, with two empty kerosene or gasoline cans among the bodies, could be seen. The hands of the charred victims

⁴⁸ M. Vautrin, “Report of the Ginling Refugee Camp, February 18, 1938,” in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937-38*, ed. by S. Lu, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL 2008, p. 169.

⁴⁹ M. Vautrin, “Sharing ‘Abundant Life in a Refugee Camp,’” Writings, Minnie Vautrin Papers, Box 1, Disciples of Christ Historical Society Library, Nashville, TN.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ M. Vautrin, “The Church in the Occupied Area: Using Nanking as an Example,” Writings, Minnie Vautrin Papers, Box 1, Disciples of Christ Historical Society Library, Nashville, TN.

⁵² M. Vautrin, “Report of the Ginling Refugee Camp, February 18, 1938,” in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 170.

were still wired behind them⁵³. Her second trip to the location and a close look reveals that:

At the edge of the large pond 96 men had suffered a most terrible death, at the other perhaps 43 and about 4 in the farm house near by. The farmers have collected enough evidence to prove that kerosene and gasoline were poured on the bodies first, then it was ignited. Men who ran were mown down with machine guns. Four ran to the shelter of the house in their agony and the house burned. As we stood by the smaller pond we saw what looked to be the top of a head. By means of bamboo poles and a wooden hook the body of the man was slowly pushed to the bank. His clothes were those of a civilian⁵⁴.

She indicated in her diary that she received a report “that the Swastika Society estimate about 30,000 killed around Hsia Gwan, and this afternoon I heard another report that ‘tens of thousands’ were trapped at ‘Swallow Cliff’ -- Yen Dz Gi -- there were no boats to get them across the river⁵⁵.” This report was further verified by another source that “during the early days of occupation 10,000 were killed on San Chia-ho, 20 - 30 thousand at Yenzigi, and about 10 thousand at Hsia Gwan. He is sure that many husbands and sons will never return⁵⁶.”

She wrote down what she had heard that even in April 1938, thousands upon thousands of victim bodies remained unburied “on both sides of the Yangtze and many bloated ones floating down the river – soldiers and civilians⁵⁷.” She learned that up to April 14, 1938, the Red Swastika Society “had buried 1,793 bodies found in the city, and of this number about 80% were civilians; outside the city during this time they have buried 39,589 men, women, and children and about 2½% of this number were civilians. These figures do not include Hsia Gwan and Shan Sin Ho which we know were terrible in the loss of life⁵⁸.”

In her February 23, 1938, diary entry, Vautrin retold the sad and terrible experiences the young girls had to endure in the country near Nanjing:

A mother brought in three young girls this afternoon and begged us to receive them. One is her daughter who went to the country in early December, the other two were country girls. They say it has been terrible in the country. Girls had to be hidden in covered holes in the earth. Soldiers would try to discover these hiding places by stamping on the earth to see if there were hollow places below. They said they had spent most of their days since December 12th in these holes⁵⁹.

According to Vautrin, as late as May 1938, murder and attempted rape cases still occurred in the city. There was a woman of almost 50 who had three sons and two daughters-in-law. At night of May 9, 1938, two Japanese soldiers came to her door at about ten p.m., and, unable to push the door in, they forced their way in through a window and found themselves in the old woman’s room. The Japanese soldiers “demanded her daughters-in-law and when she refused and started to go

⁵³ M. Vautrin, Diary, January 26, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 136.

⁵⁴ M. Vautrin, Diary, March 25, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 187.

⁵⁵ M. Vautrin, Diary, February 15, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 166.

⁵⁶ M. Vautrin, Diary, February 16, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 167.

⁵⁷ M. Vautrin, Diary, April 11, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 205.

⁵⁸ M. Vautrin, Diary, April 15, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 207.

⁵⁹ M. Vautrin, Diary, February 23, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, cit., p. 173.

for a military police, they cut two gashes in her face and one in her heart. She died from the wounds⁶⁰.”

Vautrin continued to manage Ginling refugee center into late spring of 1938 when most of the refugee camps in the Safety Zone were closed and the conditions in Nanjing were considered improved. However, because murder and rape cases still occurred from time to time, it was unsafe for young women and girls to return to their homes. Even though Ginling refugee center was officially closed on May 31, 1938, Vautrin continued to protect and care for about eight hundred women and girls through the three summer months⁶¹. In addition to initiating the home-industrial project in September to help women with survival skills, Ginling started an experimental secondary school classes for school-age girls. She carried on these programs until the spring of 1940⁶².

Vautrin did a great and courageous piece of work in the midst of killing, raping, looting, and burning. Under the unspeakable horror, the reign of terror was pervading to every corner of the city. Yet, she was determined to create a safe haven for the poor women and girls and protect them against Japanese atrocities under extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances, and, sometimes, at the risk of her own safety. Even though it was impossible to be completely safe when the Japanese army was turned loose and the whole city was culled over by insatiable Japanese soldiers, it was comparatively much safer inside Ginling campus than outside. Vautrin played an incredibly heroic role in Nanjing, which was and will be well remembered and appreciated.

Hard work under the terrible and stressful circumstances, however, had its toll on her. She suffered a breakdown in the spring of 1940. Soon afterwards, she left Nanjing for the United States for medical treatment. The treatment she received at the hospital seemed to have worked to some extent, but the depression was so deep-rooted that she took her own life on May 14, 1941, in Indianapolis, Indiana. One of her Ginling colleagues, Blanche Wu, who worked with her at the refugee camp through those difficult months, indicated that “the possible causes of her breakdown could be a combination: the family situation in her early life, the biological change of life, inadequate diet, terrible strain of war experience, overworking in Refugee Camp during war time and disappointment in her Peace Movement⁶³.”

Like most heroes, Vautrin lived and worked heroically for humanity, in particular, for the protection and safety of women, though she was to suffer a tragic death. For that reason, she was remembered by many Nanjing residents as the goddess under the reign of terror. Her image and her life story will undoubtedly be treasured by and remain an inspiration to people for generations to come.

⁶⁰ M. Vautrin, Diary, May 13, 1938, in *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, cit., p. 210.

⁶¹ M. Vautrin, “The Church in the Occupied Area: Using Nanking as an Example,” cit.

⁶² S. Lu, *Introduction to Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, cit., p. xxvii.

⁶³ B. Ching-yi Wu, *East Meets West*, cit., p. 55.

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