

Writers, artists wielded truth as weapon in the fight for freedom

In the Chinese history of the War of Resistance against Japan, some aspects were widely and publicly released, but more truths were revealed through the words and the images created by writers and artists who risked their lives to tell the full story. They employed art and literature as their weapons to fight the enemy and lifted the flagging morale of the Chinese people. Their contribution to the ultimate victory can never be undervalued.

Translator, editor had key role in resistance

Tian Zhongwen

Chen Bingyi, a renowned literary translator, learned his craft working on the writings of the former Soviet Union in 1932. Through his career, he completed a bunch of important literary translation works, including novels, plays and poetry by Russian writers.

During the period of the anti-Japanese war, Chen Bingyi, established with his companions the New Youth bookstore in Shanghai, selling books and translation works of advanced literature. Through this he met Jiang Chunfang, secretary of the culture wing of Shanghai underground communist party, who encouraged him to further his study of literature and translation.

In 1941, the Pacific War broke out and the Japanese army cracked down on culture undertakings and destroyed Chen's bookstore. Afterward, Chen took up the position of translator and editor at Shi Dai Weekly, co-founded with Jiang Chunfang.

It was the most influential event that ever happened in Chen's life. After the Soviet-German war broke out, the three — Chen Bingyi, Jiang Chunfang and Chen Junshi — created the "Shi Dai Weekly," which published a great number of communist articles and works by contemporary scholars such as Guo Moruo and Ah Ying.

As Shi Dai Weekly grew bigger, Shi Dai Daily also kicked off, attracting excellent comrades-in-arms in culture and journalism, including Feng Xuefeng, Lou Shiyi, Lin Danqiu and Wang Yuanhua.

During his work at Shi Dai, Chen Bingyi finished translation pieces based on novels and plays written by Pushkin, Kopojehko, Gorky and Simonov, and received strong accolades and popularity from readers and literary workers.



Book translated by Chen Bingyi

Poster propagandist's long road



Xiao Xiao

In his early years, Shen Yiqian, the great painter and journalist during the time of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945), was apprenticed to the Japanese painter Tatsumi Hosokawa and later studied Western as well as Chinese painting at Shanghai Training School of Fine Arts.

After the "September 18th Incident" in Chinese history, Shen gathered dozens of his school mates to work on anti-Japanese posters and they posted the pieces at every station along the Beijing-Shanghai Railway. They also created English versions and sent them to the US and Canada. One of Shen's masterpieces called "The Sharpshooter" was later included in the album of the "Modern Chinese Art Collection."

Back then, playwrights like Tian Han and Yang Hansheng and painters like Xu Beihong and Pan Yuliang thought very

highly of Shen's works.

"At that time, there were few artists who had the courage to blow their passion for their own country and take up art as their weapon to fight against the enemy. He was one of a kind," Mr Tian, one of Shen's anti-Japanese painting group members recalled.

During the period of anti-Japanese war, Shen did portrainting for Chairman Mao Zedong, Premier Zhou Enlai, Deng Yingchao, Lin Bu, He Long and Feng Yuxiang. One of his outstanding portraits of Cun Xingqi, the vision commander who died for his country in the battle of Zhongtiaoshan, became emblematic memorial to honor the martyrs.

Mao Dun, the writer, remarked in his article "Thought on Yiqian's Exhibition" in 1942, "Among so many artists, he's the one who managed the longest and farthest journey."



Shen Yiqian's painting

Stage plays rallied the occupied population

Ji Ming

Qu Baiyin started his career on the stage as a play actor in 1930s. After the January 28 Songhu war broke out, Jiading was invaded by the Japanese troops. Qu determined to take up stage plays as a weapon and grouped Ge Yihong and Tian Lu to establish the Blizzard performing group. Together they were called the "three virtuosos in Jiading's modern drama."

On March 3, 1933, one year after the Japanese military occupation of Jiading, the Blizzard staged several plays with Shanghai Camel Group at Confucius Temple, including "Put Down Your Whip," "The Imperialist Rampage," "To the Front" and "Friend or Foe."

"March 3 in Jiading" and "Transition," both created and played by Qu, Ge and Tian, depicted respectively the Japanese troops' invasion and a youth who made up his mind to join the army and fight against the invaders. Their performances received magnificent support in Jiading. Afterwards, they donated all the returns to



Anti-Japanese Volunteers of the Northeast.

In April 1938, the Chinese army achieved victory in Tai'erzhuang and Zhou Enlai assigned the anti-Japanese play group to perform at the front in celebration. Qu was the leader of the No.3 and the No.9 play groups and accepted the mission to leave for Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province, with his 22 members. Their wonderful performance received a standing ovation



Qu Baiyin (left) and his play "Southbound Train"

from the audience.

At the beginning of 1944, Qu participated in the first Southwest Play Exposition organized by Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian.

A total of 60 anti-Japanese plays were staged at the three-month expo, attracting almost 100,000 people. The event turned into a glorious page in Chinese play history.

Young, brave heroes of popular war dramas

Tao Jiming

Zha Liangjing, writing under the pen name of Tian Lu, spent all his life working on writing, directing and reviewing plays. The person who influenced him most was his cousin Qu Baiyin.

The two cousins, together with Ge Yihong, grouped as the Blizzard performing group, aiming to inspire people and promote the culture. Zha was known as one of the "three virtuosos in Jiading's modern drama."

Zha highly admired Tian Han, the Chinese national anthem lyricist, and Lu Xun, the famous Chinese writer. His pen name was formed by the two great people's surname, Tian and Lu.

After the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression broke out, Zha started his playwriting career with the production "The Glorious Return," vividly depicting the calm and peaceful life of the citizens before the war and how the young and the brave went to the front to fight and finally returned in victory.

The play was staged in Shanghai Xinguang Theater and received great comments from the audience.

"The anti-Japanese plays were an important part of the movement. They reflect the Chinese people's passion for their own country," said Zha in his review of Kunming plays in 1940.

Tan emerged as leading intellectual for liberation cause

Tan Chi

When Tan Zhengbi was still studying at school in 1919, the May 4 Movement took place. After that, Tan started to read a great number of "new literature" works and attempted to write in modern Chinese.

In June 1920, Tan's debut novel "The Blood and Tears of Peasants" was published in Enlightenment, the supplement of the Republican Daily. The story revealed the exploitation of the peasants by heartless landlords.

Tan was also the compiler of the "Historic Outline of Chinese Literature," which was published in 1924, hailed as the first historical work about Chinese literature written in modern Chinese.

In 1941, the concessions in Shanghai were invaded and occupied by the Japanese after the Campaign on Pacific War. Most literatis in Shanghai chose to retire into inland areas, but this response was not for Tan. He remained in Shanghai and began his work of recruiting talents for the liberated areas. In June 1943, he was appointed as the dean of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts.



Tan Zhengbi

Stories translated by Chen Qianqing

