

THE CHINESE WAR OF RESISTANCE AGAINST JAPANESE AGGRESSION

A Concise History

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Introduction

The Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931–1945) was a just war waged by the Chinese people in opposition to Japanese militarist aggression. It was also an important part of the Global War against Fascism in which China was the main battlefield in the East. This was the first time in China’s modern history that a great national liberation war against foreign aggression ended in total victory.

I. Fourteen Years of Resistance

The September 18th Incident of 1931 marked the beginning of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. By the time the war drew to a close in 1945 when Japan announced its unconditional surrender, it had been going on for 14 tortuous years.

The first six of the 14 years were fought as regional wars of resistance mainly in northeast China, northern China, and Shanghai, and served as both the prelude to and an important part of the War of Resistance as a whole. The remaining eight years, fought as a nationwide War of Resistance, were an extension and development of the earlier regional wars of resistance. These were years of decisive, full-scale nationwide war, during which it took all of China’s might to fight against and eventually defeat the Japanese aggressors.

The period from September 1931 to December 1932 saw the rise

of regional wars. On September 18, 1931, Japan manufactured the September 18th Incident and swiftly occupied the whole of northeast China. On January 28, 1932, Japan initiated the January 28th Incident in Shanghai to support and provide cover for its army's aggression against northeast China.

However, in the face of these large-scale acts of aggression, the Kuomintang (KMT), China's ruling party, and its government followed a policy of attending to internal pacification before resistance to foreign invasion. First they did not resist Japanese aggression against the northeast, and then they made compromises and concessions to Japan during the Battle of Shanghai, which broke out on January 28. As a result, the Japanese Army had no difficulty in securing success in its attempt to occupy the Northeast and create the puppet state of Manchukuo, and went on to force the Chinese government to sign the Shanghai Ceasefire Agreement, which placed China in an unfavorable position.

As the contention between China and Japan quickly intensified and resistance against Japanese aggression and the need to save the nation came to be the theme of political concern on the minds of the Chinese people, the Communist Party of China (CPC) was wholly opposed to the policy of attending to internal pacification before resistance to foreign invasion and became the first to call on all Chinese people to carry out armed resistance against the Japanese invasion. It actively supported the resistance efforts of Chinese soldiers and civilians throughout the country, and directly participated in, gave impetus to, and dominated the war of resistance in the Northeast.

The period from January 1933 to July 1937 was characterized by the development of regional wars of resistance. During this stage the Japanese Army, according to plan, began its invasion of eastern Inner Mongolia and northern China in an attempt to create another puppet Manchukuo. As Japan was systematically expanding its aggression

against China and nationwide pressure on the KMT government for resistance against the aggression and national salvation was mounting, although continuing to adhere to the policy of internal pacification before resistance to foreign invasion, the government began to put up a certain level of resistance. Some pro-resistance officers of the KMT led their men against the Japanese in the battles of the Great Wall, Chahar and Suiyuan. At this point, in order to transform the regional wars into a nationwide war of resistance, the CPC promptly made a major policy proposal, suggesting that a Chinese united front be established to resist Japanese aggression. At the critical moment when dealing with the Xi'an Incident it went on to follow this policy. This laid the foundation for putting an end to the civil war between the KMT and the CPC and bringing about their cooperation in resisting Japanese aggression.

The period from July 1937 to October 1938 was a stage of strategic defense in the nationwide War of Resistance. On July 7, 1937, Japan manufactured the Lugou Bridge Incident (also referred to as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident), starting a full-scale war of aggression against China.

With the policy of building a Chinese united front against Japanese aggression based on cooperation between the KMT and the CPC in place, China set out on a nationwide War of Resistance that was to decide the future of the Chinese nation. During this stage, the KMT military resisted large numbers of Japanese troops in center stage battlefields and fought the battles of Shanghai, Taiyuan, Xuzhou, and Wuhan, suffering tremendous casualties. The center stage battlefields constituted the main setting for resistance against the Japanese Army's strategic offensives. At the same time, the armed forces led by the CPC marched to the frontlines to resist the Japanese, engaged them in battle and secured victory at Pingxingguan and in other battles. Following this, they moved to areas behind enemy lines to launch guerrilla warfare and began developing

their own backstage battlefields. It was in this way that the strategic combination of backstage battlefields with center stage battlefields took shape with the two flanks coordinating with each other to attack the enemy from both sides. This shattered any hope the Japanese Army had entertained of fighting a brief war in which they could secure a quick victory to subjugate China.

The period from October 1938 to July 1943 was a stage of strategic stalemate in the nationwide War of Resistance. Following the Battle of Wuhan in October 1938, a now overstretched Japanese Army was facing a shortage of troops. In this context it was forced to give up its attempt to gain a quick victory, and instead shifted to a strategy of fighting a longer war, keeping the pressure on center stage battlefields and having its main force concentrate on coping with the guerrilla warfare in its rear areas. At this stage, the KMT became increasingly passive in fighting the Japanese, and began instead to engender more and more anti-Communist friction. The CPC however kept the banner of the Chinese united front against Japanese aggression skyward and persevered with the principles of resistance, unity, and progress. At the same time as it was struggling against KMT diehards, the CPC did all it could to safeguard the cooperation between the KMT and the CPC in resisting Japan. Both soldiers and civilians under the CPC fought tirelessly to beat back ruthless offensives launched by the main force of the Japanese Army and gave the backstage battlefields a significantly more important role, with areas behind enemy lines progressively becoming the main battleground in the nationwide War of Resistance. After the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, China persisted in fighting the Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, which it had long been fighting alone, and continued to play an important role in the world's fight against fascism, serving as the Allies' main battlefield in the East.

The period from July 1943 to September 1945 was a stage of strategic