

120th Anniversary of the Birth of General Ye Ting

General Ye Ting is a brilliant strategist in modern Chinese history, one of the founders of the People's Liberation Army and the Army Commander of the New Fourth Army.

He was born in 1896 into a rural family in Huiyang, Guangdong. Originally named Ye Weixun with a courtesy name Xiyi, he later changed his name to Ye Ting. In 1911, the 15-year-old Ye Ting studied in the Huizhou Prefectural Middle School of Sericulture. Influenced by the new thought of democracy and the Huanghuagang uprising, he resolutely cut off his pigtail and with dogged determination, took the path of saving the nation through military actions.

In 1916, after graduating from Hubei No. 2 Army Preparatory School, he studied in the Military Engineering Department at Baoding Military Academy. In 1919, he joined the Nationalist Party led by Sun Yat-sen and was later appointed as the Battalion Commander of the Regiment of Bodyguards for the Presidential Palace. During the time of Chen Jiongming's mutiny, he led his troops to guard the Presidential Palace in Guangzhou and protected Soong Ching-ling to lead her out of danger.

In 1924, after the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party began cooperating for the first time, Ye Ting was recommended to study abroad at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East and the Chinese Class of the Red Army Academy in Moscow. Afterwards, he joined the Chinese Communist Party and when he returned to China, he became the Commander of the Independent Regiment of the Fourth Army of the National Revolutionary Army. The Fourth Army served as the advance party of the Northern Expedition, occupying Tingsi Bridge and the Hesheng Bridge, performing remarkable feats. Having earned the reputation of the "Iron Army" for the Fourth Army, he was therefore honoured as the "Famous General of Northern Expedition".

In 1927, the Nationalist Government backpedalled on the advocacy of "Cooperating with Russia and Accepting Communism". Ye Ting led his troops to declare battles and participate in directing the Nanchang Uprising and the Guangzhou Uprising, which served as the prelude to the Chinese Communist Party independently leading armed combats and establishing the Revolutionary Army.

After the Mukden Incident, as an exile in Germany, Ye Ting was concerned about his motherland and therefore returned to Macao and lived in a residential unit at No. 76 Rua do Almirante Costa Cabral, spending a period of warm family life with his family members. During this period, he actively took part in anti-Japanese activities and kept in touch with the party organisation. In July 1937, Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China and the whole country united to resist Japan. Ye Ting put on the military uniform again and acted as the Commander of the newly organised Fourth Army (i.e. the New Fourth Army) of the National Revolutionary Army. He participated in the rearrangement of the guerrilla troops of the Red Army in the south and led the armed forces to advance on the battlefield behind enemy lines in Central China. Within three years, his troops of over 100 000 people became an important force to resist Japan.

In January 1941, Ye Ting was detained in places like Chongqing and Enshi after the "New Fourth Army Incident" and he vehemently rejected when Chiang Kai-shek induced him to capitulate. While he was in jail, he wrote the awe-inspiring "Song of the Prisoner" to demonstrate his sincere conviction: "I shall obtain eternal life in blaze and blood".

After the victory of the War of Resistance against Japan, Ye Ting was rescued by the Central Committee of the party and released in March 1946. However, he died in a plane crash when he was in route from Chongqing to Yan'an and the body of this fallen hero was buried in the "4.8" Martyrs' Cemetery in Yan'an. Nevertheless, General Ye Ting's outstanding contribution to the liberation of the Chinese people will go down in the annals of history forever.

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