

《献给第三次世界大战的勇士》

‘Dedicated to the Warrior of the Third World War’

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(‘Xiàn gěi dì sān cì shìjiè dàzhàn de yǒngshì’)

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## Introduction by the Translator

There is no need to be happy or worry though! This is a recollection of the events of World War III in a Chinese poem. Written in the late sixties of the last century, the poem is titled ‘Dedicated to the Warrior of the Third World War (献给第三次世界大战的勇士)’. In the poem, WWII has been fought as the last war to eliminate the system of exploitation (read imperialist and capitalist exploitation). America has been defeated by the Chinese forces; and, as a result, the great edifice of communism will be built in America and elsewhere. The teachings of Mao, the will of Lenin, the vision of Marx shall be realised. The world is red!

It is a fantasy poem. Nobody knows who wrote it. What is known is that it was written around 1968–69 by a red guard (the foot soldiers of the Cultural Revolution) — some say the red guard was female, most say male. Dr. Cheng Xiaonong, a Chinese–American author, when talking about this poem says that he remembers reading it in the late sixties when he lived in Shanghai. As revealed through the review of available literature on this poem, it exchanged hands in the form of a tradition called *shichao* (诗抄); roughly translated it means ‘poetry copy’.

The Tian’anmen poems, a collection of poems mourning the death of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai is a prominent example of a *shichao*.

This poem is a product of what I call the ‘red chauvinism’ of the Cultural Revolution era, when the romanticism around the supremacy of the idea of communism over everything, led by Mao Zedong thought, had created ten years of delirium in China.

Interestingly enough, the poem, complete with music, recited with quite the fervour of the revolutionary songs of the Cultural Revolution era like ‘The East is Red (东方红)’ or ‘Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman (大海航行靠舵手)’ was recently uploaded on the Chinese video hosting website *Bilibili* in June 2024. The poem also finds mention in a popular Chinese contemporary fantasy novel series called *Ghost Blows out the Light* (鬼吹灯). In fact, the younger generation of China started discussing this poem after it found mention in the fantasy novel series. However, Chinese academia had already recorded the existence of this poem. Whether out of academic interest or general intrigue, the poem has been surfacing and resurfacing in China.

I shall now present the reader with the complete translation of the poem. In translating this version into English, I have diligently tried to follow the three cardinal principles of translation as advocated by the progressive Chinese intellectual and translator Yan Fu: faithfulness (*xìn*; 信), expressiveness (*dá*; 达), and elegance (*yǎ*; 雅).

If the translation reads simplistic, it is because the original poem's language *is* simplistic. The art, literature, and culture of the Mao era, especially of the Cultural Revolution era, were completely focused on socialist realism and revolutionary romanticism. They were primarily the tools of ideological and political training of the masses to indoctrinate them into believing in communism and in Mao Zedong, the 'great helmsman'. Therefore, in all mediums of communication, politics dominated art, content dominated form.

The poem 'Dedicated to the Warrior of the Third World War' is no exception to the zeitgeist of its time. The poem, which reads like a sentimental ballad, also reflects the dominant ideology of the red guards — and by extrapolation, of China of that era — advocating the establishment

of a new world order led by communism by completely destroying the old-world order led by American imperialism. Similar ideological sentiments were reflected in the 1952 Chinese film *Window to America* (美国之窗) satirising the American capitalist system and calling for the American workers to join the communist movement to overthrow this system.

Does the poem reflect anything about today's China? Can we apply Mao Zedong's oft quoted line 'using the past to serve the present (古为今用)' to it? These questions are matters of polemic, in which readers will most probably engage in *negotium* or *otium*. Meanwhile, the poem 'Dedicated to the Warrior of the Third World War' reads as follows:

**‘Dedicated to the Warriors of the Third  
World War’**

(I)

Taking off the discoloured army cap,  
to lay the pure white wreath,  
lightly,  
lightly I walk towards your grave;  
in the words most cordial,  
I unbosom my profound remembrance.  
The lilies in North America bloomed,  
withered and fell again,  
you lay here a year and a year again.  
Tomorrow,  
when the rosy dawn begins,  
I shall return back to that beloved  
motherland,  
but you will sleep eternally at the opposite  
shore of the Atlantic,  
in the cemetery of the other land.  
I will never hear your familiar voice again,  
I will never see your friendly smile again,  
I will never forget that bold and  
uninhibited attitude,  
I will never forget those bright eyes.  
With tears rolling down,  
my grieving sound quietly circles around.

Ah, the surging waves of memories,  
take me back far, very far...

(II)

Together we ‘fought as guerrillas’ in the  
parks,  
together we went to the Jinggang  
mountains for the Great Link-up\*.  
On the eve of burying imperialism,  
revisionism, reactionism,  
before marching to that world!  
Beside the radio,  
we listened attentively,  
Ministry of Defence order of the  
declaration of war,  
its each and every word.  
That unforgettable night,  
the yearning for combat,  
spread to every nerve;  
hatred for class,  
inflamed every vein.  
In this third world war,  
to finally eliminate the exploitation  
system,  
we two were grouped in the same batch.  
Where did our friendship begin from,

there's no way to know?  
What I do know,  
she is loftier than the mountains, longer  
than the roads.  
In the trench,  
we shared a loaf of bread,  
licked a fistful of salt together.  
Quietly humming the same tune,  
we shared an army blanket.  
Every word, every line,  
their great truth,  
the thoughts of the leader,  
we read together over and over again.  
Under the red flag,  
with loyalty to the Party,  
with the desire to give our lives,  
we raised high the hand holding the gun,  
'We are willing,  
willing to give our everything,  
to realize communism!'  
Amid the soaring flames,  
shoulder to shoulder,  
we charged at the enemy's three-hundred-  
meter defence line,

with the machine gun towards the  
exploiter,  
firing the bullets of revenge of the  
proletariats.  
Do you still remember?  
Our war horses drank water at the bank of  
river Don,  
leaping across the plains of Ukraine,  
crossing over the peaks of Ural,  
we kindled once again the Kremlin red  
stars.  
Along the footprints of the Commune,  
passing through the streets of Paris,  
marching on the drumbeats of the  
Internationale,  
we galloped across every town, every  
village, every harbour of Europa.  
The lake views of Switzerland,  
the leaning tower of Pisa,  
the sunset of Yemen,  
the monastery of Phnom Penh,  
the cherry blossoms of Fujiyama,  
the cigars of Havana,  
the red wine of España,  
the spring waters of sub-Sahara,  
all these,

never made us nostalgic!  
For in our hands, we had guns,  
and responsibilities on our shoulders.  
So many sleepless days and nights,  
so many blood-soaked battles north,  
battles south,  
this way,  
our undefeatable force,  
following closely the red sun,  
kept moving forward.

Hear—  
the echo of our brothers from the five  
continents,  
converging in a torrent scouring the earth!

Look—  
the flag of justice of the slaves of four  
seas,  
seeming like sparks putting a prairie on  
fire!

Ah,  
the world is red!  
only the White House remains.

(III)  
Three red flares rose in the night sky,  
patting on my shoulder you said—

‘Hey partner,  
remember still?  
‘See the Red Heart of the Kids in the Sino-  
American Battlefield!’—  
that speech of a polit bureau member,  
from twenty years ago.

Remember,  
this is the last battle,  
the decisive battle of humanity’s fate.

It is today.’  
The bugle sounded,  
our red hearts connected,  
we quickly marched forward.  
Green leaves in one hand,  
poisonous arrows in the other,  
this brass eagle,  
this emblem,  
running amok for two centuries whole,  
as people cheered for victory,  
was flung in the blazing flame.

The rulers of the ‘gold dollar imperialist  
nation’,  
the marble statues of those presidents,  
with their stiff fake smile,  
tightly licked the parquet floor.

Charge!  
Attack the last rooftop,  
occupy the last commanding elevation.  
Just then,  
you jumped in front of me,  
with friendship and life,  
blocking the evil bullet,  
shot from a corner.  
Your body fell heavily,  
on the white stairs of the White House,  
shedding dark red blood.  
Your mouth silently wiggled,  
as if commanding me—  
'Forward! Move forward!'  
Look—  
on top of the skyscraper,  
the dazzling red flag,  
fluttering in the wind,  
the flag red like the fire,  
lit up your eyes resplendent.  
Hot blood akin the red flag,  
moistened your smiling face.  
Tightly I held you in my arms,  
the pain seeped into my heart.

Space,  
disappeared;  
time,  
stopped.  
Heart burning with hatred,  
flashing lightning and rumbling thunder in  
mind.  
Mountains went silent,  
sea wept,  
autumn leaves fell slowly,  
soaked September clouds hung low,  
crying.  
Oh, dear friend!  
Why?  
Why in that moment of victory,  
did you leave me,  
leave me forever?  
(IV)  
Flames of war had extinguished,  
gun smoke dispelled.  
Ah, the sun,  
never was it so warm before;  
ah, the sky,  
never was it so blue before;

smiles of children,  
never were they so sweet before.  
The teachings of Mao,  
the will of Lenin,  
the vision of Marx,  
shall realize in our times.  
Rest in peace,  
dear friend,  
for I understand your unfulfilled wishes.  
The responsibility of the glorious  
construction after war,  
shall be shouldered by us;  
the great edifice of communism,  
will be built by us.  
Rest in peace,  
dear friend,  
white clouds, the blue sky,  
will compose songs for you;  
fresh flowers, the green grass all over the  
mountains,  
will tell everyone,  
here sleeps a martyr.  
One last time,  
I hug you.  
One last time,

I kiss your smiling face goodbye.  
See you again,  
dear friend,  
for now, our common mission,  
makes me move forward.

(V)

The mountain is high, the road is long,  
the heart is anxious to return home.  
Tomorrow, when the rosy dawn begins,  
we shall return to that home long separated  
from.  
In the ocean,  
the sky and water unite,  
in my heart,  
intense emotions infinite.  
We will solemnly report to the motherland  
—  
Your excellent son,  
for the happiness of the humanity,  
for the historical necessity,  
sleeps eternally at the opposite shore of the  
Atlantic,  
in the cemetery of the other land.



**Translator's Note:**

\*The Great Link-up (大串联) was a program started by the Communist Party of China under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong to mobilise the youth of China, especially the red guards, for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The program, which officially ran roughly from August 1966 to February 1967, helped the red guards travel to Beijing from different parts of China and vice-versa.

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*The views expressed here are those of the original author and not necessarily of the translator or of the Institute of Chinese Studies.*

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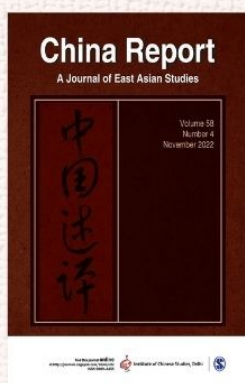


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