

In an interview with my grandma about why my grandfather, York Yu, was such a bitter man, she told me about how he was a somewhat famous calligraphy artist in Guangdong. However, he was drafted by Chiang Kai-shek to fight in the army. Compared to his life as a calligraphy artist, being a soldier was terrible. Food and water was scarce and infrequent. It was during this time period that his hatred for Japanese people began to fester. My grandfather did not really know why Japan chose to attack China at that time, so he asked Japanese soldiers why they were attacking. He did not interrogate them in a room, he only asked some soldiers on the verge of death after a battle. My grandfather only became angrier that all of the Japanese soldiers that he fought and questioned did not know why they were fighting either. My grandfather fought many battles and every battle he fought resulted in him losing more friends. After the war ended, my grandfather thought he could relax and live a normal life.  
 That never did work out. He recalled the rise of Chairman Mao and the Communist party. My grandfather hated how Mao was effectively a dictator who was ruining city life. A single person deciding to send city people to the country was a punishment in my grandfather's eyes. His family worked hard for a better life in the city, so he did not wish to see it torn down. He heard that Chiang Kai-shek evacuated to Taiwan before, so he decided to take a plane to Taiwan with the remaining money he had.  
 Taiwan was a melting pot of various people from China who decided to flee. He remembers the báisè kǒngbù (White Terror). Chiang Kai-shek had enforced martial law and killed many Taiwan refugees out of paranoia.  
 He then shifted to talking about smoking cigarettes as a teenager. He was always stressed out up until when he decided to leave Taiwan. During this time period, my grandfather was always full of worries. He had married Ping Er, another refuge from Guangdong. They had three kids, but as the family grew, so did his worries. He would think on a daily basis either "Will we live through this?" and "Do we have enough money for our kids to eat and go to school?" Money was always of a constant concern, which resulted in their children being very stingy when they were older. He bought rusty bikes for his grandchildren to go to school with. My grandfather smoked more and more to cope with the stress. At one point, he saw too many of his smoking friends die from cancer or becoming bedridden with bad lungs. My grandfather would personally knock cigarettes out of his friends' hands when they smoked. Having lost so many of his friends to war, smoking, and worrying about money for most of his life explained why my grandfather was a bitter man.

Research  
 The official name of the war my grandfather fought in is the Second Sino-Japanese War, which then became a part of World War II. Japan's imperialism was escalating and they were beginning to take territory along east Asia's mainland. It began with the Incident of Manchu. According to the Office of the Historian, "On September 18, 1931, an explosion destroyed a section of railway track near the city of Mukden. The Japanese, who owned the railway, blamed Chinese nationalists for the incident and used the opportunity to retaliate and invade Manchuria. However, others speculated that the bomb may have been planted by mid-level officers in the Japanese army to provide a pretext for the subsequent military action," (Bureau of Public Affairs United States Department of State). The fact that the Japanese soldiers that my grandfather asked did not know why there were fighting could be explained by the fact that the Japanese were disguising their activities as incidents as an excuse to attack China. This follows the global pattern of imperialist nations attempting to hide or justify the crimes they commit. My grandfather remembered one Japanese soldier (keep in mind this is a Japanese to Chinese to English translation) said "No one in my regiment knows, we were told to fight. No reason. They gave no reason. I have no clue why we are even fighting. What did your country do? At least you know why you fight." Even today, Japan nationalists will deny events such as the Rape of Nanking. There are and were people who either never learned or refuse to believe the Japanese were not justified invaders.  
 My grandfather's disgust with Chairman Mao's rule was also justified. According to Jefferey Hays, "Mao announced that the Cultural Revolution would “thoroughly expose the reactionary bourgeois stand of those...who oppose the party and socialism." Children of landowners were thrown into trash cans. Families who lived in large houses where squeezed into single rooms as their possessions were smashed by Red Guards and poor families moved into the other rooms,"' (Hays). My grandfather wanted to return to his rich life as a calligraphy artist after the war. He absolutely hated the thought of losing everything his family sacrificed for his education and property. To cut his losses, he had to escape the Cultural Revolution by doing what Chiang Kai-shek did, fleeing to Taiwan.  
 Chiang Kai-shek's rule over Taiwan was somewhat better in comparison to Mao in the Cultural Revolution. My grandfather could work and send his children to school. However, Chiang Kai-shek's one party rule over Taiwan basically let him run the island as a dictatorship. As many dictators do, Chiang Kai-shek became paranoid. This paranoia about Communist agents grew and manifested itself as the White Terror. In reality, native Taiwanese nationalists upset with Chiang Kai-shek's rule were protesting after a black market cigarette deal resulted in the police shooting an innocent person, but this was branded as Communist to avoid an independence movement. The government began to crackdown on anyone who seemed remotely like a traitor and imposed a period of martial law from 1949 to 1987. In an article from the Taipei Times, the author writes" In many cases the victims were executed on fabricated or groundless charges of espionage or treason without a fair trial, and would simply vanish after being taken away by government intelligence agents," (Tai-lin). Mainly poor refugees and the occasional politician were subject to being killed, but the paranoia spread to ordinary middle-class people living in the cities as well. This prompted people in Taiwan to leave for other countries or city-states, such as the US, South Africa (surprisingly), Malaysia, and Hong Kong.

Works Cited

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