

= Xu Lai (actress) =

Xu Lai (Chinese : 徐来 ; Wade ? Giles : Hsü Lai ; 1909 ? 4 April 1973) was a Chinese film actress , socialite , and World War II secret agent . Known as the " Standard Beauty " , she was active in the film industry for only three years , and quit acting after the suicide of the great star Ruan Lingyu in 1935 . Her first husband was Li Jinhui , the " Father of Chinese pop music " .

During the Second Sino @-@ Japanese War , Xu and her second husband , Lieutenant General Tang Shengming , ostensibly served under the Japanese @-@ controlled Nanking puppet regime , but secretly worked as agents for the Republic of China resistance based in Chungking .

With the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War , Xu and Tang defected to the People 's Republic of China , but were severely persecuted during the Cultural Revolution (1966 ? 76) . Xu Lai died in prison in 1973 ; her husband survived and lived until 1987 .

= = Early life = =

Xu Lai was born 1909 to a poor family in Shanghai . Her original name was Xu Xiaomei (???) and she was also called Xu Jiefeng (???) . Due to poverty , she began working at a British @-@ owned egg factory in Zhabei at the age of 13 , but was later able to attend school after her family fortunes improved .

In 1927 , Xu attended the China Song and Dance School run by Li Jinhui , who is now considered the " Father of Chinese pop music " . She also joined Li 's Bright Moon Song and Dance Troupe and toured many cities in China and Southeast Asia . She married Li , who was 18 years her senior , in 1930 , and gave birth to a daughter named Xiaofeng .

= = Film career = =

In 1932 , Xu Lai was recruited by Zhou Jianyun , a cofounder of the Mingxing Film Company , to join the studio . She became famous after starring in the 1933 silent film Remnants of Spring (??) , in which she appeared in probably the earliest female bath scene in the history of Chinese cinema . Later that year she starred in A Feather on Mount Tai (????) . In 1934 , she starred in Cheng Bugao 's popular patriotic films Romance of Mount Hua (????) and Go Northwest (????) .

Xu Lai , together with Wang Renmei and Li Lili , her former colleagues at the Bright Moon Troupe , were the earliest stars to portray the vibrant , wholesome , and sexy " country girl " prototype , which became one of the most popular figures in Chinese cinema , and later inherited by the cinema of Hong Kong .

Xu became widely known as the " Standard Beauty " , and a ceremony was held to crown her the " Beauty Queen of the Far East " . The Shanghai Chinese Women 's Association strongly disapproved of her " coronation " . Among the objections raised was that she " shocked the public by exhibiting herself in the nude " , referring to her bath scene .

The suicide of actress Ruan Lingyu in 1935 , which caused three other women to commit suicide during her 3 miles (4 @.@ 8 km) long funeral procession , had a major impact on Xu Lai . She quit acting after finishing her last film , The Boatman 's Daughter (???) , directed by Shen Xiling . It was critically acclaimed and considered her best film .

The sudden death of her daughter Xiaofeng , also in 1935 , caused a breakdown of her marriage with Li Jinhui and the couple divorced in November of that year . It was an acrimonious divorce and Li requested compensation for the investment he had made in training her .

= = Secret agent = =

In 1936 , Xu Lai married Tang Shengming (???) , a Kuomintang Lieutenant General from a prominent Hunanese family . Tang was a notorious playboy and a close friend of Dai Li , chief of the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics (Juntong) , the secret service of the Republic of China . Xu 's assistant Zhang Suzhen (???) , a Juntong secret agent , became Tang 's concubine , and

Shanghai tabloids often reported salacious stories of the three sharing the same bed . Tang made sure that Xu Lai introduced Dai Li to the " movie queen " Hu Die , who later became the spy chief 's mistress .

A year after her wedding , the Second Sino - Japanese War erupted . The Imperial Japanese Army attacked Shanghai in August 1937 , and the national capital Nanking in December . Tang 's older brother , General Tang Shengzhi , was the chief commander of the doomed defense of Nanking , which resulted in the Nanking Massacre . Tang Shengming , meanwhile , was the deputy commander of Changsha and chief commander of Changde , both in Hunan province .

In 1940 , Tang Shengming surrendered to the Japanese and was recruited to serve in the Reorganized National Government of China (the Wang Jingwei regime) , a puppet government established by Japan in occupied Nanking . Tang was appointed the commander of public security of Jiangsu province , while Xu was his socialite wife who became a close friend with the wives of Wang Jingwei , Chen Gongbo , and Zhou Fohai , the top leaders of the puppet regime . They were widely condemned by the Chinese public as traitors , and Tang Shengzhi publicly renounced all relationship with his brother and sister in law .

After the surrender of Japan at the end of World War II , the Kuomintang government revealed that Tang Shengming and Xu Lai had been sent by Dai Li to serve as secret agents in the Wang Jingwei regime . The couple took great personal risks to obtain intelligence about Japanese spies and troop movements and pass it to the resistance . Xu Lai reportedly discovered the identity of a Japanese spy while playing mahjong with Zhou Fohai 's wife , and personally delivered messages to Chinese agents in Shanghai in urgent situations .

= = After 1949 = =

In 1949 , as it was becoming clear that Mao Zedong 's Communists were winning the Chinese Civil War , Xu Lai moved her family from Shanghai to British Hong Kong , while Tang Shengming went to Changsha to join the surrender of Hunan Governor Cheng Qian to the Communists . His brother Tang Shengzhi also surrendered . In 1950 , Tang Shengming was appointed deputy commander of 21st Group Army of the People 's Liberation Army and fought battles against the Kuomintang troops in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces .

In 1956 , Tang was appointed a counsellor of the State Council of the People 's Republic of China , and Xu Lai moved with her husband to Beijing .

When the Cultural Revolution started in 1966 , Mao 's wife Jiang Qing , who had been a minor actress in Shanghai during the 1930s , began persecuting many of her former colleagues who were familiar with her " bourgeois " past . Xu Lai and her husband were both imprisoned for unfounded criminal charges . On 4 April 1973 , Xu died in prison after years of torture and maltreatment , at the age of 64 . Tang survived the tumultuous period , and lived until 1987 .