

Chinese Historical Figures: 1966 - 1976

Ba Jin (1904 – 2005)

Litterateur

Ba Jin (given name Li Yiaotang, courtesy name Feigan, also known as Pei Gan, Yu Yi and Wang Wenhui) was born on November 25, 1904 into a scholarly family of officials in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. Enlightened by the May Fourth Movement, he became interested in the ideas of Democracy and Anarchism.

Ba Jin studied in English in Chengdu Foreign Language Specialist School before attending the Affiliated High School of South-East University from 1920 to 1927. During that time, he engaged himself in the progressive literature journal *Crescent* and was an active member in the Equality Society (*Jun She*), promoting anarchism and fighting against feudalism.

In 1927, he left for Paris where he finished his first novelette, *Miewang*, (“Destruction”) in the following year.

In the winter of 1928, Ba Jin returned to China and settled in Shanghai. He wrote *The Dead Sun*, *Reborn*, *Miners (Shading)*, *Germination (Mengya)* and *The Love Trilogy* which consisted *Fog*, *Rain* and *Lightning*.

In 1931, Ba Jin completed and published *The Torrents Trilogy*.

In 1934, he assumed Editor of Literature Quarterly in Beijing and left for Japan in autumn.

In 1935, Ba Jin returned China and assumed Editor-in-chief at the Cultural Life Publishing.

In 1936, together with other writers including Lu Xun, Ba Jin published ‘The Chinese Artist and Writers Manifesto’ and ‘The Artist and Writer Manifesto on Solidarity against Aggression and For Freedom of Speech’.

During the Sino-Japan War (1937-1945), while drifting across China, Ba Jin served as a council member of the National Anti-Japanese Arts and Literature Association in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Guilin and Chongqing.

In 1938 and 1940, Ba Jin published *Spring* and *Autumn*, the second and the third of his *The Torrents Trilogy*.

Between 1940 and 1945, Ba Jin wrote *Fire* of the *Anti-Aggression Trilogy*. He also finished novelettes, *Ward Four* and *Garden of Repose*, during the latter part of the Sino-Japan War.

In 1946, He completed the novel *Cold Nights*.

In 1949, Ba Jin attended the First National Literator and Artist's Congress and was elected as the Standing Committee Member of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles.

In 1950, Ba Jin took the post of Vice Chairman of the Shanghai Federation of Literary and Art Circles. He also visited the frontline in Korea twice during the Korean War.

In 1957 Ba Jin started writing under the political guidance due to the political pressure. In 1959, to mark the 10th anniversary of People's Republic of China, Ba Jin published seven essays including *We Will Build Heaven on Earth, Greet the New Brightness* and *Ultimate Glory*.

In 1960, Ba Jin was elected as Vice Chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and Vice Chairman of the Chinese Writers' Association.

On May 9, 1962, Ba Jin attended the Second Shanghai Lterators and Artists' Congress and delivered the opening speech entitled 'Raise Higher the Red Flag of Mao's Ideology in Arts and Literary'. He also made speech called 'Writer's Courage and Responsibilities'.

In 1966, during the Cultural Revolution, Ba Jin was criticized by the Rebel Faction and was confined in a detention center, which was nicknamed the "cowshed". It marked the beginning of his treatment of cruel persecution and

compulsory labor work. In 1967, Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) and the Shanghai arts and literature circle published a variety of special supplements to criticize Ba Jin. In 1968, Ba Jin was even more severely and widely persecuted. Newspaper such as Wen Hui Bao published many lengthy articles such as 'Thoroughly Expose the Real Anti-Revolutionary Nature of Ba Jin' and 'Condemn and Fight Resolutely against Ba Jin, a Counter-Revolutionary Authority in Arts and Literature Circle', Jiefang Daily (Liberation Daily) also issued many articles under the headline 'Thoroughly Criticize Ba Jin, the Enemy of Proletarian Dictatorship'.

Since 1969, Ba Jin has copied and recited *Inferno* from *The Divine Comedy* of Dante in the "cowshed". During this period, Wen Hui Bao launched unbridled criticism to attack Ba Jin in articles such as 'Resolutely Criticize Ba Jin and His Anarchism' and 'Thoroughly Criticize Ba Jin's Poisonous Works of *Family, Spring, Autumn*'.

In 1972, His wife, Xiao Shan, died of illness. During the same year, Ba Jin was allowed to return Shanghai and resume his translation job.

From 1978, in Takung Pao, a Hong Kong newspaper, Ba Jin published five volumes of essays entitled *Random Thoughts*, revealing his life experience and reflection on the Cultural Revolution. They were regarded as "The Consciousness of China".

"I write because I have things to say. I publish because I have debt to pay off. The ten-year catastrophe has taught some people to keep silence while the ten-year blood debts have also made the silent ones cry out repeatedly."

"I have believed in lies, I have spread lies, but I have never struggled with lies. When people lifted it up, I followed closely. When people brought out their God, I kneeled down and prayed. I swallowed doubts and discontentment if I have any. I was even foolish enough to crawl into the magician's box willingly so that I could to be reborn".

In 1986, in his *Random Thoughts*, Ba Jin proposed to build a Cultural Revolution Museum, "In order that everyone sees clearly and remembers clearly, it is necessary to build a museum of the "Cultural Revolution," exhibiting concrete and real objects, and reconstructing striking scenes which

will testify to what took place on this Chinese soil twenty years ago! ... It is only by engraving in our memory the events of the "Cultural Revolution" that we will prevent history from repeating itself, that we will prevent another "Cultural Revolution" from recurring."

In 1985, under Ba Jin's advocacy, the National Museum of Modern Chinese Literature was built.

Ba Jin's works have been translated into many different languages. From 1982 to 1985, he received Italy Dante International Honorary Award, French Honorary Award and was awarded Honorary Doctorate of Literature of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.