

The Strategic Position and Role of Guizhou in the Rear of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression

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Abstract: Guizhou, formerly known as "Qian" in ancient times. Located in the upper reaches of Jingchu and at the gateway to Yunnan and Guangxi, it has been a strategic location in the southwest since ancient times. After the Nationalist Government relocated its capital to Chongqing, it established a rear area for the Anti Japanese War with Sichuan and Chongqing as the political center, covering provinces such as Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, and Ningxia that had not yet been occupied. Due to its unique geographical location, Guizhou invested a large amount of anti Japanese forces and played an important role in politics, economy, culture, healthcare, and transportation in the rear areas of the Anti Japanese War.

1. Introduction

During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the whole country invested a huge amount of human, material and financial resources. The proportion of people participating in wars in Guizhou ranks among the top in the country. Despite its economic backwardness, it did not affect the collection of grain taxes in Guizhou, which promptly provided military food security for the frontline. The relocation of a large number of economic and cultural institutions has promoted the economic development and educational prosperity of Guizhou.

1.1. Human Resources

During the war, Guizhou, with a population of only ten million, planned to conscript 583, 000 soldiers, but actually conscripted 675, 432, with an excess of 92, 432. In Yunnan, on average, one out of every 20 people in the province participated in the war. In Sichuan, on average, one out of every 14 people participated in the war, while in Guizhou, one out of every 12 people participated in the war.^[1]

In terms of talent cultivation, Guizhou has produced a group of outstanding revolutionaries such as Wang Ruofei, Lin Qing and Zhou Yiqun, achieving the goal of "preserving talents and personnel" and enhancing the combat effectiveness against Japanese aggression.

Guizhou actively accepts refugees. According to the "Investigation on the Losses of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in Guizhou", from 1938 to 1947, a total of more than 700, 000 refugees fled or evacuated to Guizhou.^[2]Through measures such as accommodation,

evacuation and resettlement, certain guarantees were provided for the basic survival and medical care of refugees, and the social order in the rear area during the war was stabilized.

1.2. Economic Data

In the early 1930s, due to the limitations of terrain and transportation conditions, the productivity level in Guizhou was relatively low. In addition, the continuous political struggles and warlord battles have also greatly affected the economic development of Guizhou. At that time, agriculture in Guizhou was still at a relatively primitive level, and the vast majority of the province was still in the primitive agricultural production stage of "slash-and-burn farming".^[3] Before the war, there were only four modern factories of a certain scale in Guizhou, including two paper mills, one tannery and one power plant.^[4] Later, as the Nationalist Government moved its capital to Chongqing during the war, a large number of enterprises moved westward to Guizhou, making Guizhou an important base for economic construction in the rear area.

At that time, the national agriculture was confronted with problems such as production stagnation, food shortages, merchants' speculation and price gouging, which posed a serious threat to social stability. The Nationalist Government decided that starting from 1941, land taxes in all provinces across the country would be levied in kind. As of February 15, 1942, Guizhou was one of the three provinces in the country where the levy of land taxes in kind exceeded 90%.^[5] Despite having only 1.5% of the country's cultivated land area and a severe shortage of grain, Guizhou achieved the third-best result in the country in the actual collection of land tax.^[6] It ensured the supply of military provisions and also stabilized the social order in the rear area.

1.3. Educational ideology

Culture was a sharp ideological weapon in China's anti-aggression struggle. At that time, China's education actually entered the period of wartime education. A total of nine ordinary colleges and universities, including Zhejiang University, Daxia University and Guangxi University, moved to Guizhou. In addition, a number of military academies and cultural institutions also moved in, receiving support from the local authorities and people in Guizhou. Guizhou provided them with the necessary food, clothing, housing and transportation. During the days when they moved westward to Guizhou, these universities avoided the war and achieved relatively stable development.

During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, a large number of scholars and literati traveled or stayed in Guizhou. Scholars such as Xu Beihong, Wen Yiduo, Feng Zikai and Ye Shengtao all left behind literary works with the imprint of Guizhou. For example, in 1941, Zhejiang University founded the magazine "Ideas and Times" in Zunyi, Guizhou. Scholars who migrated westward to Guizhou reflected on Chinese culture here, integrating Guizhou's folk culture into their thinking. Through teaching, writing, and gathering, they actively carried out anti Japanese propaganda and saved the country with words.

In addition, the "Peace Village" located in Zhenyuan, Guizhou Province, was a place where the Nationalist Government managed Japanese prisoners of war during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. More than 600 Japanese prisoners of war were successively detained here. Under the guidance and publicity of the Communist Party of China, the Anti-War Alliance was established and actively spread the ideas of democracy and peace.

1.4. Cultural relic protection

In order to protect the important cultural relics and ancient objects of our country that have lasted for thousands of years, institutions such as the Palace Museum in Peiping, the Central Museum, and

the National Central Library have also begun to move westward. Among them, the cultural relics of the Palace Museum were moved westward along three routes. On the southern route, over 80 iron boxes filled with national treasures were transported upstream from Nanjing by river ferry to Hankou, then by train to Changsha, and finally to Guiyang. In October 1938, Guiyang was bombed by Japanese aircraft, and the cultural relics were moved to Huayan Cave in Anshun again.

It was not until 1944 that the Japanese army threatened Qiannan, and the national treasures that had been hidden in Anshun for nearly six years were forced to be transferred to Sichuan. Before leaving Anshun, the Palace Museum made an exception and exhibited 192 precious items in Guizhou Province, including Wang Xizhi's three calligraphy works and Huang Tingjian's "Poems of the Songfeng Pavilion". This exhibition is also the only one in the history of the Palace Museum.

2. The core hub of the Southwest transportation mainline

Guizhou is located in the heart of Southwest China, bordering Sichuan, Chongqing, Hunan, Guangxi and Yunnan provinces. It is a must-pass route for the east and west as well as the south and north in the southwest region. In the history of transportation in the rear area of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, it holds a very important strategic position.

2.1. Land transportation

The road transportation in Guizhou was of great significance during the war. At that time, with Guiyang as the center, there were four important transportation arteries: Sichuan-Guizhou, Yunnan-Guizhou, Guizhou-Guangxi and Hunan-Guizhou. Among them, there is a section of the Yunnan-Guizhou Highway known as the "Twenty-four Turns", which is a key transportation route with a prominent strategic location. It was first built by the Guizhou warlord Zhou Xicheng. One side of it is against a mountain and the other side is against a cliff, and the construction process was extremely difficult. According to the data, the straight-line distance from the foot to the top of the mountain by the twenty-four turns is approximately 350 meters, and the vertical height is about 260 meters. It is built in an "S" shape along the mountain slope at an Angle of about 60 degrees, winding and twisting to the pass, with a total distance of approximately 4 kilometers.^[7]

The successive fall of important cities in central and eastern China, the blockade of the transportation lines along the Yangtze River and the eastern coast by the Japanese army, and various international aid supplies to China had to be transported to Yunnan via the Yunnan-Burma Highway and the "hump route", and then via the Yunnan-Guizhou Highway to reach the secondary capital Chongqing or the anti-Japanese frontlines in Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, etc.^[8]

It can be seen from this that the "Twenty-four Turns" in Qinglong, Guizhou Province, are undoubtedly the lifeline for the transportation of military supplies during the war of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in Southwest China and an important node on the major artery of international aid to China. In addition, in 1944, Guizhou Province rushed to build the Guizhou-Guangxi Railway, which became the fastest passage for the southwestern rear areas such as Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou to reach Jiangxi, Guangxi, Fujian and Guangdong.

2.2. Air transportation

During the eight years of the full-scale War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, a total of ten airports were built in Guizhou Province, including Anshun, Qingzhen, Huangping, Dushan and Zunyi. Among them, as one of the central airports in the southwest region, Huangping Jiuzhou Airport began to be put into operation against the Japanese Air Force in the autumn of 1942. General Chenault's Flying Tigers were once stationed at Kyushu Airport. They successively

participated in famous battles such as the Defense of Hengyang and the Battle of Xiangxi. In October 1943, during the autumn counteroffensive campaign jointly launched by China, the United States and the United Kingdom against the Japanese army in Burma, more than 70 sorties of various types of fighter jets took off from the Jiuzhou Airport to participate in the battle, effectively striking the Japanese invaders.

Dushan Airport was a strategic military location during the Anti-Japanese War. It mainly cooperated with Huangping Airport in bombing the Japanese forces in Guangdong and Guangxi, and also undertook the task of transferring strategic materials to China after being air-transported via the "Hump Route". It was an important transfer point for the "Hump" air transport.^[9]

3. Rear International Medical Center

During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, it was a period of rapid development in the history of medical and health care in Guizhou. On the one hand, after Wu Dingchang became the chairman of Guizhou Province, he carried out a series of reforms to the original medical and health care system in Guizhou, further promoting the development of medical institutions in the region. On the other hand, with the westward relocation of the Nationalist Government, a large number of medical colleges and medical talents were introduced to Guizhou. More importantly, as the First Aid Corps of the Red Cross Society of China moved to Tuyun Pass in Guiyang, international medical aid teams arrived in Guiyang, providing crucial medical support for the rear area during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.

3.1. Medical development and relocation medical institutions in this province

The Guizhou Provincial Government first established the Health and Medical Affairs Preparatory Office, passed the Health Service Outline and the regulations of the Provincial Health Commission, and later reorganized it into the Guizhou Provincial Health Department.^[10] And gradually establish health administrative management institutions, including the Health Commission of Guizhou Province, the Health Experiment Department, smoking cessation hospitals, sanatoriums, and medical institutions at the municipal and county levels.

In addition, after the Nationalist Government moved westward to Chongqing, the Army Hospital of the Ministry of Military and Political Affairs, the Central Experimental Institute of Health, Nanjing Central Hospital, and the Affiliated Hospital of the Army Medical School also moved in one after another. Various talents in both traditional Chinese and Western medicine also flocked to Guizhou,^[11] promoting the progress of medical and health care in Guizhou.

3.2. The First Aid Corps of the Red Cross Society of China and international aid organizations to China

Due to the changes in the frontline warfare, in early March 1939, the "Wartime Health Personnel Training Institute of the Department of Health" jointly established by the First Aid Corps of the Red Cross Society of China and the Department of Health of the Nationalist Government was relocated to "Tuyun Pass" in Guiyang. This place is also the location of the Chinese Red Cross Society Ambulance Corps, gathering outstanding medical experts from all over the country.

At that time, an international medical aid team from nine countries including the United Kingdom, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Germany and Bulgaria came to Guiyang. They provided advanced technical guidance in medical care, rescued wounded soldiers in the war of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, effectively supported China's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, and some medical staff even sacrificed their own lives.

According to statistics, at its peak, the Rescue Corps had 150 medical teams of various sizes, with thousands of medical staff and various auxiliary workers. A total of 120,000 people underwent surgeries, 350,000 had fractures reduced, 2.14 million were hospitalized, and 2.48 million were outpatients.^[12] It was a very important wartime medical position and the "heart" of wartime rescue in the rear area of the entire war of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.

4. Dushan in Qiannan - The Last Barrier to Resist the Japanese Invaders

In the autumn of 1944, the Japanese army captured Changsha, Hengyang, Guilin and Liuzhou. To obtain supplementary resources for the continuation of the battle, the Japanese invaders attempted to open up the transportation line between the Guangxi-Guizhou mainland, thus capturing Chongqing in one fell swoop. In December of the same year, they took over counties such as Libo, Sandu, Danzhai and Dushan in Guizhou Province, with the vanguard advancing to the vicinity of Duyun. During this period, the Japanese army committed all kinds of evil deeds, including burning, killing, looting and plundering. According to statistics, the Japanese army invaded 38 towns and townships in 5 counties of Qiannan, causing property losses of approximately 152.5 billion yuan and about 24,250 casualties.^[13] It is historically known as the "Qiannan Incident".

When the Japanese invaders' iron hooves stepped into Qiannan, they encountered fierce resistance from the Chinese military and civilians. Among them, the Communist Party of China led the anti-Japanese guerrilla forces, the 29th Army of the Kuomintang, the American Allied forces and the patriotic military and civilians in the Qiannan area to fight bravely at Shenhe Bridge, eventually forcing the Japanese troops to retreat from Dushan. The Battle of Dushan was a significant event in the history of the resistance war of ethnic minorities in Guizhou Province and an important battlefield for the joint resistance of the Allied forces. The Japanese army, which had invaded most of China, suffered its final blow in Dushan, Guizhou.

The Battle of Dushan, which took place in Guizhou Province, was a legendary decisive battle in the history of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. "It started from Lugou Bridge in the north and ended at Shenhe Bridge in the south. "It had been 14 years since the September 18th Incident when Japan invaded China. Important cities in central and eastern China had fallen one after another, but Shenhe Bridge in Dushan became the final stop of the Japanese invasion of China.

5. Conclusion

Since ancient times, Guizhou has been known as the key to Yunnan and Chu, and the barrier to Sichuan and Guangdong. The political stability, economic development and cultural prosperity of Guizhou are related to the stability of the rear area in Southwest China and the development of the anti-Japanese situation. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, Guizhou made tremendous contributions both on the front line and in the rear.

In the rear camp of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the unique terrain conditions of Guizhou curbed the rapid advance of the Japanese army. The Qiannan Defense line received more attention in the "Battle of Dushan". This was not only a successful blocking battle in which the military and civilians of Guizhou and the international allied forces united their determination against the enemy, but also an important juncture when the Japanese invaders no longer ventured deep into the rear.

The medical and health system in the rear area of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, with Guiyang at its core, provided the most crucial medical support for the entire rear area. Another significant role is that Guizhou, as an important transportation hub, is located in the heart of Southwest China. It is not only a strategic passage connecting the provinces in Southwest

China but also an important bridge linking South China and Central China, serving as the southern gateway to the "wartime capital". Among them, the "Twenty-four Turns" in Qinglong were one of the most important transportation routes in the rear area of China during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.

More importantly, during the construction of the rear area, Guizhou provided human, financial and material support and assistance for the westward relocation of a large number of military industrial enterprises, large and medium-sized factories and educational institutions, meeting the basic supply and demand of the province during the peak of westward relocation. The "blood transfusion" function of the wartime economy was well operated in Guizhou. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, Guizhou did not fall silent. From the early stage to the later stage of the war, in the vast rear areas of western China, the military and civilians of Guizhou always demonstrated an indomitable and tenacious belief in victory with their blood and lives.

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