

**HASEGAWA TERU ALIAS
VERDA MAJO (1912-1947)**

**A JAPANESE WOMAN ESPERANTIST IN
THE CHINESE ANTI-JAPANESE WAR OF
RESISTANCE**

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Introduction

The marriage between members of enemy nations during the war is one of those chapters that have been underrepresented in women's history in general, and in the history of China and Japan during the 1930s and 1940s in particular. The difficulty of such relationships, which often were not able to withstand internal and external pressure, is obvious. Many of those, who held on to their relationships, ran the risk of being caught between two stools: they were either branded as traitors of their country or were denounced as spies and persecuted. In any case hardly any such couple could escape the odium of being a suspect. Still there were quite a few couples who did not just endure their fate passively, but tried to turn this particular situation into an asset.

One day in Canton, at the end of the year 1937, three men and one woman sat together: one of the men was Guo Moruo 郭沫若, the famous Chinese writer, who was in a relationship with a Japanese woman himself and had left her along with their children in Japan when the Sino-Japanese War broke out; another one was a Chinese officer also married to a Japanese woman and who also had had to separate from her, taking their children with him to live with their Chinese grandparents; the other two were a young Chinese called Liu Ren 劉仁 and his Japanese wife Hasegawa Teru 長谷川 テル. Liu Ren had come to ask the influential Guo Moruo to help him and his wife to get to Hankou, which used to be the centre of the Chinese anti-Japanese resistance at the time. Guo Moruo listened to Liu's request and commented in a lowered voice: "what a tragedy". After that there was anxious silence. Liu Ren and his wife then stood up and bid farewell. On their way home he said to his wife: "Tragedy? No, for us it's not a tragedy!" – This account is given in Hasegawa Teru's auto-biographical fragment "In fighting China" which she wrote in Esperanto close to Chongqing in 1944.¹ Who was this woman, who as a Japanese, Esperantist and wife of a Chinese consciously tried to support the Chinese anti-Japanese resistance?

¹ "En Ĉinio batalanta" (In fighting China) is included in *Verkoj de Verda Majo* (works of Verda Majo), Beijing 1982, pp. 25-107. For the mentioned incident, see pp. 85-87.

Hasegawa Teru in Japan

Hasegawa Teru, originally Hasegawa Teruko 长谷川照子, was born in 1912 as the second of three children into the family of an engineer.² The family moved many times, but most of her childhood and adolescence Teru spent in the Tokyo area. Because she apparently did not have a very harmonious relationship with her parents, especially with her father, after graduation in 1929 she enrolled at the Women's College of Education in remote Nara prefecture to become a teacher. During her studies, she started to write poems and smaller prose pieces and also came into contact with leftist literary circles. Via her elder sister, who had started to learn Esperanto in Tokyo, she also became acquainted with Esperantist circles. There was a close symbiosis at the time between a part of the Japanese Esperanto-movement and the movement for proletarian literature.³ Teru became active in the Nara area first and started to learn Esperanto. In 1932 she was briefly taken into custody, being suspected of having "leftist sympathies", and was thereupon expelled from college. Thus, she returned to Tokyo, where she started to learn typewriting and fully committed herself to propagating proletarian Esperantist literature, especially amongst women.⁴

² About her life see Tone Kōichi 利根光一: *Teru no shōgai* テルの生涯 (Teru's life), Tokyo 1980 (expanded new edition; first edition 1969).

³ On this, see, amongst others, Ōshima Yoshio 大島義夫 and Miyamoto Masao 宮本正男: *Hantaisei esuperanto undōshi* 反體製エスペラント 運動史 (History of the nonconformist Esperanto movement). Tokyo 1974, chapt. 6 and 7. For a more general account on the Japanese Esperanto movement see Hatsushiba Takemi 初芝武美: *Nihon esuperanto undōshi* 日本エスペラント 運動史 (History of the Japanese Esperanto movement), Tokyo 1998.

⁴ The meetings of this "Klara circle", named after Klara Zetkin, occasionally took place at Teru's home. These meetings, however, encountered little enthusiasm with her conservative father though it is questionable how much information he had about the content of those meetings.

Via these activities she came into contact with China for the first time since Ye Laishi 葉籟士 (Esperanto: Ĵelezo)⁵, the editor of the Chinese Esperanto magazine *La Mondo* (The World) in Shanghai at that time, was – on the occasion of the women’s day (March 8th) of 1935 – looking among the Japanese Esperantists for someone to write an article for his journal about the situation of Japanese women. Teru offered her help and under the name “Verda Majo” (green May)⁶ she published an article in the March/April issue 1935 focusing on the Japanese Women’s Movement and the question of labour. In her article she emphasised that fascism in Japan had largely suppressed the proletarian women’s movement;⁷ but at least the “bourgeois” women’s movement continued to fight for women’s suffrage, improvement of the legal status of women (e.g. with the inheritance law), abolishment of prostitution, maternity protection etc. Teru, however, did not forget to mention that there existed also “patriotic” women’s organisations, which collected donations for the construction of airplanes and the like, and organised military training for schoolgirls.

Also the issue of women’s labour she addressed critically. On the one hand, Japanese women increasingly entered the world of work despite the slogans of “patriots” which claimed women belonged to hearth and home; but, on the other hand, women were threatened by exploitation much more than men. Teru drew upon several statistics to substantiate her claim and concluded that only the liberation of the proletariat as such would guarantee equal rights also to female labourers.⁸

⁵ This name was also based on the Russian word for „iron“. Ye Laishi (1911-1994) had studied in Japan himself and was one of the most important activists in the latinisation movement of Chinese in the 1930s, which was modelled on the Soviet example.

⁶ Green is the symbolic colour of the Esperantists (green=hope, Esperanto= the hopeful one; under the pseudonym “Dr. Esperanto”, the Jewish oculist L. Zamenhof and inventor of Esperanto, who grew up in Russian-occupied Poland, had published his project in 1887). With “May” Teru possibly referred to Labour Day (May 1st) – fitting for the topic she wrote about, which would involve a “proletarian symbolic”.

⁷ Its organ „The woman worker” had been banned.

⁸ “Virina stato en Japanio“ (The situation of women in Japan), originally published in *La Mondo* (The World), March/April 1935, printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 165-171. Later in time, when Teru lived in China, she would address the situation of Japanese women labourers again (see below).

Apart from the issue of women's rights, it was literature that was of special interest to Teru – and a year later she published an article on this topic, again in the Shanghai magazine *La Mondo*. In this article she addressed the difficulties Japanese proletarian literature was confronted with: on the one hand, it was under immense governmental pressure since its official journal had been dissolved in 1933 and some of its prominent representatives had been “led” to publicly distance themselves. On the other hand, it had often degenerated into mere propaganda because of its overemphasis on politics. Teru briefly introduced the Chinese readership to some of the remaining authors and their works but noted with regret that they were now to be considered as isolated phenomena only.⁹

It was also literature that most probably brought Teru and Liu Ren together. Liu Ren was from Manchuria and had – together with his younger brother – come to Tokyo for study. Like some other compatriots, Liu started to learn Esperanto in Japan as the internationalist idea behind it had appeal to Chinese in the surrounding of an increasingly nationalist Japan. The Japanese Esperantists even held special classes for non-Japanese and thus created a concrete opportunity for an “Asian fraternisation”, which stood in direct contrast to the official Japanese policy of “Asia under Japanese leadership”. Like Teru, Liu was also interested in literature, and most likely, they met each other through a mutual Esperantist friend at a theatre play.¹⁰ Based on their shared enthusiasm for Esperanto and “leftist” literature, Teru and Liu Ren, who was two or three years older than her,¹¹ married in autumn 1936. Teru knew that her parents would never approve of a marriage with a Chinese, and thus she did not inform her family and kept her marriage as a secret for some time; especially since she continued to live with her parents. Liu Ren returned to China at the beginning of the year 1937. Teru followed

⁹ “Nuna stato de japana proleta literaturo“ (The present situation of Japanese proletarian literature), originally published in *La Mondo*, March/April 1936, printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 194-197.

¹⁰ Cf. Tone, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

¹¹ This can be inferred from a list of Chinese students in Japan, in which Liu Ren was also listed (cf. Tone, *ibid.*, pp. 289-290). It is, however, unclear whether the provided age is his real age or a counting according to *sui*.

him briefly afterwards in April and needed the help of Liu's Chinese friends since she did not own a passport. Probably because of this, a Chinese friend was soon taken into custody under the accusation of "having helped a representative of the Japanese Esperantists participate in an all-Chinese Esperanto congress, directed by the Comintern".¹²

Later, in her auto-biographical fragment, she described her thoughts during her passage to Shanghai as below:

Silently I am sitting on the bed in the third-class cabin of the large British ship. I am surrounded by more than a dozen passengers: men, women and children. All of them are Chinese. Chinese – yesterday they were strangers to me, today they are fellow passengers, and tomorrow they will be compatriots. Many Japanese are used to despise Chinese. They regard them as inferior people. In their brains, the symbol of the Chinese is still the queue, which resembles a pig's tail. Even those Chinese, who are dressed in a modern, European style, would still be considered to stink of garlic and pig fat. So because of instinctive physical aversion they despise the Chinese. What else do they know about Chinese? Yes, they know that Chinese people hate the Japanese and that they would always oppose them on all sides. This very often leads to bloodshed. So, naturally, my parents and relatives are enraged and are unable to make head or tail of why I would deliberately affront them – as they call it – by a marriage with a Chinaman.

Teru, however, justified her internationalist attitude with the Esperanto ideal:

For us Esperantists nationality is nothing absolute. It only means a difference in language, custom, culture, skin colour etc. We see each other as brothers and sisters of a big human family.

To her, this ideal was closely related to anti-fascism:

Hitler propagates racial superiority and purity of the German nation, and makes great efforts to implant hatred and contempt of other European nations into his people. He is the common enemy of Esperantists of all countries, including Germany. The same applies to the Japanese government. They dig a ditch between Japanese and Chinese, and they are deepening and extending it continuously, so that it appears natural and insuperable.

Several hundred or thousand Japanese women have crossed this trench now and have married a Chinese. I don't know whether their path was rosy or thorny. Their love is international but at the same time personal. I am one of them as well. What is not the same is that our relationship is inseparable from Esperanto.¹³

When only after some weeks of her stay in Shanghai (and hence the first time that she really lived together with her husband) the Japanese war of aggression started, for Teru

¹² "En Ĉinio batalanta", in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, p.42.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 27-29.

this meant that she discarded the option of returning to Japan. Rather, she wanted to support the Chinese in their resistance.

Verda Majo in China

Teru's social awareness had been raised already in Japan via her activities in the Esperantist proletarian literature movement. Her first experiences in China, however, helped her to sharpen this awareness. In comparison to Japan, which was relatively prosperous at that time, the stark differences in wealth in Shanghai were a big shock for new arrivals. On the one hand, Shanghai was the "Paris of the East" – an international and flourishing city, but on the other hand, extreme poverty was also omnipresent. Teru summarised this situation metaphorically as "coolies and skyscrapers":

This contrast struck me so strongly and absolutely, that every time I hear the word "Shanghai" these two things automatically appear in my mind, and this is also the reason why I don't like Shanghai.¹⁴

Since Teru still could not speak Chinese, she wanted to support the family's income by writing articles for a progressive Japanese magazine on literature, but the outbreak of the war confounded her plans.¹⁵ In August 1937, when the Japanese army started to attack Shanghai, Teru, for the first time, did not only experience the reality of war but being Japanese, she also had to hide at home. Her most important window to the world were the Chinese Esperantists. After the outbreak of the war and shortly before the attack on Shanghai, three hundred Esperantists from all over China had gathered in Shanghai to celebrate the 50-year-anniversary of Esperanto. On this occasion, Teru had the chance to socialise and establish contact with people who would later be useful to her. Apart from learning Chinese during the first couple of months of the war, Teru mainly took part in the Chinese Esperanto magazine *Ĉinio hurlas* (China screams).

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵ Until then, she had only published a translation, done with the help of Liu Ren, of a report about the Xi'an Incident of 1936. In this incident Chiang Kaishek was forced to renew the United Front with the Communists.

Her statements during these months demonstrated her determination to face her difficult circumstances, but she also clarified that it was not “the Japanese” who were the enemies of China but “the Japanese imperialists”. In “Love and Hatred”, written in August 1937, she did not only denounce the attack of the Japanese army and the resulting sufferings of the Chinese civilian population but also avowed herself to a “righteous resistance”. The hatred of the military and the war should not lead to a “wrong peace”; rather the Chinese people should fight for their freedom with all their “flesh and blood”. Opponents of the war did also exist in Japan, and they were just as suppressed as the Chinese. Thus she called upon her “Japanese brothers” to become aware of the fact that their enemy was not here in China but at home.¹⁶

In September 1937 she wrote an official letter to the Japanese Esperantists to ask for their support. The letter was written under the provocative slogan “China’s victory is the key to the future of the whole of Asia”: Teru appealed to their sense of justice in view of the events:

I am not an animal. Even I have learnt something about justice. Thus the same question has been going around in my head for a long time: what am I supposed to do? Shall I go to the front like some of my comrades or work for the refugees and wounded soldiers like my female comrades? I cannot do it because I am a weak woman, who cannot even speak proper Chinese. Comrades! Fortunately, I am an Esperantist. Yes, “fortunately” I am; as due to this fact I have found my duty in this revolutionary battle against Japanese imperialism. Now we have to use our language more efficiently as an international weapon. “With Esperanto for the liberation of China!” is not only a nice phrase on the paper. My support for *Ĉinio hurlas* and other things is not about contributing some pathetic technique by a foreign Esperantist to release a thin magazine. When I pick up the pen, my blood is boiling because of the oppressed justice, and a fiery wrath unleashes upon our brutal enemy. I feel joy: I am with the Chinese people!

You can call me a traitor if you want! I am fearless. I rather feel ashamed of belonging to a nation that is invading another country and creating a living hell to innocent and helpless refugees. Genuine patriotism would never be an obstacle to the development of mankind. Everything else than that is called chauvinism. And how many chauvinists has the war already produced in Japan! I could not hold back my anger and disgust when I heard that even intellectuals, who had claimed to be circumspect, progressive or even Marxist, now shamelessly adhere to reactionary militarists and politicians and beat the drum for what they call “the just cause” of the “imperial army”...

Comrades! China’s victory in this war does not only involve the liberation of the Chinese nation but also the liberation of all the oppressed nations of the Far East, including Japan. The victory is the key to the future of the whole of Asia – if not the key to the future of the whole mankind.

¹⁶ “Amo kaj malamo” (Love and Hatred), written in August 1937, appeared in Verda Majo’s collection *Flustr’ el uragano* (Whisperings out of the storm), first published in Chongqing in 1941. I am referring to the print in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 374-376.

Comrades! How could we start to waver now? Consider: at this very moment non-action means unforgiveable guilt... The newspapers reported that last week in Shanghai more than 12.000 Japanese soldiers died. And they incessantly let thousands and thousands of young people come over from Japan now. How can I be sure that one or another amongst them is not one of you? No! The mere idea is frightening me.¹⁷

Teru's emotional outcry also had another reason: she was aware that her younger brother, whose political orientation had been always different from hers and more inclined to the conservatism of her father, could sooner or later also be one of those life-risking and murdering soldiers. Thus her translation (published in *Ĉinio hurlas* in October 1937) of a letter by a Japanese woman married to a Chinese to her parents in Japan could be also interpreted as a personal one. The letter did not only describe the atrocities of the Japanese army which she assumed – not without good reason – were barely made public in Japan, but also demonstrated the lack of alternatives for a woman in such a peculiar situation: Should she return to her “fatherland”? Should she abandon her husband and children? Even if she returned, she would be despised in Japan for being the wife of a “Chinaman” and would not be given any peace. At least her parents should stop her brother from destroying the home of his sister in the name of “justice”!¹⁸

However, conscientious objection – even if someone seriously wanted it – was almost impossible for young Japanese man, and Teru was well aware of this fact.¹⁹

When Shanghai fell in the autumn of 1937, Liu Ren and Teru tried to get all the way through Hong Kong and Canton to Hankou, where the temporary centre of the anti-

¹⁷ “Venko de Ĉinio estas ŝlosilo al morgaŭo de la tuta Azio“ (China's Victory is the key to the future of the whole of Asia), written in September 1937, in *ibid*, pp. 377-380.

¹⁸ “Voĉo el korfundo: Letero de japanino edziniĝinta al ĉino“ (Voice from the bottom of the heart: letter of a Japanese woman married to a Chinese), originally in *Ĉinio hurlas*, new series, issue 3, Oct. 25, 1937, printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp.444-447.

¹⁹ Cf., amongst others, her translation of a report from a young Japanese about his involuntary recruitment: “Rememoro ĉirkaŭ la komenco de la milito: Skribo de japana soldato” (Memories of the beginning of the war: The writings of a Japanese soldier), originally in *Heroldo de Ĉinio* (Herald of China) no.40, Sept. 1, 1940; printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp.469-476.

Japanese resistance was situated. This undertaking was everything else but easy. Though they were always well treated by local Esperantists, who they had mostly met at the 50-year-anniversary of Esperanto, Teru perceived Canton, in contrast to multi-cultural Shanghai, as her “first real encounter with China”. In Canton people turned around to stare at her and she had to keep her nationality hidden especially after the issue of a decree which ordered Chinese to separate from their Japanese partners.²⁰ This was actually the background of the above mentioned conversation with Guo Moruo and the Chinese officer. Liu Ren claimed identity of an overseas Chinese for his wife, but since he was a Chinese from the North who did not speak Cantonese, he himself was not in an advantageous position either. Guomindang police surveillance was the order of the day. Though the Cantonese Esperantists were able to establish a division for Esperanto in the propaganda department of the Cantonese government, and Teru collaborated with them for a short time, she was regarded as a suspect, especially when the Japanese air strikes increased. Thus she was expelled to Hong Kong.²¹

Of this time in Canton and Hong Kong only two of Teru’s articles have remained, which both addressed the oppression in Japan itself. One was a translation into Esperanto of an article written by Kaji Wataru 鹿地亘 (1903-1982), a well-known representative of proletarian literature and a communist, who had fled to Hong Kong and founded an anti-military league amongst Japanese. Teru and Kaji Wataru met by chance during their escape from Shanghai to Hong Kong on a ship. Later, Kaji was many times employed by the Guomindang – in the context of the United Front – for anti-Japanese propaganda. In his article, Kaji gave a devastating verdict about the cultural situation in Japan since the beginning of the war: all important personalities had disappeared from public view and culture was now only to be found in prison.²² In addition to that Teru listed some examples from daily life with the goal to unmask the

²⁰ “En Ĉinio batalanta“, in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, p.78.

²¹ Her auto-biographical fragment ends here.

²² Teru’s Esperanto translation was made in Canton in February 1938: “Reala justo” (The real just) in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 427-431. Kaji was scheduled to work for the propaganda department of the Japanese section in Canton while Teru worked for the Esperantist section.

“barbaric” character of war-time Japan’s claim to bring “culture” to the rest of Asia. Further on, she also emphasised the fact that these tendencies had been noticeable in Japan for several years already. While Hitler proceeded publicly to burn books, Japan had been doing this indirectly for a long time through censorship in the name of “public morals”. Even Christmas parties were now declared “un-Japanese” and thus forbidden; dance halls were closed down; perms and co-education proscribed. Why then, she remarked sarcastically, did the top brass play golf, wear European uniforms and use Western canons and planes? They should be consistent and had better arm their army with swords in the traditional manner of the samurai!²³

Despite her commitment, Teru and Liu Ren only managed to re-enter China together after several months (in the summer of 1938); most probably with the help of some of their influential acquaintances such as the above mentioned Guo Moruo (for whom Teru’s old Esperanto-friend Ye Laishi was working).²⁴ Both of them were employed in the propaganda department in Hankou, however, this time, Teru worked in the Japanese section mostly as an announcer. Apart from that she also interviewed a couple of Chinese women, who distinguished themselves in active resistance.²⁵ While her earlier anti-Japanese works had been aimed at an Esperanto readership, she now became the Japanese voice on the radio, spreading anti-Japanese propaganda amongst Japanese listeners.²⁶ Since Hankou fell in autumn 1938, this phase only lasted three months. After Hankou had been occupied, the Japanese were able to uncover the identity of that voice: Hasegawa Teru. Teru and Liu Ren, along with the propaganda department, had already fled via Guilin to Chongqing, the Chinese war capital. Thereupon a report appeared in Japan in the *Miyako shinbun* 都新聞 (News of the Capital) about Hasegawa Teruko, a “traitor to her country”, including some

²³ “Japanio: Lando sub barbara regado” (Japan: Country under a barbarian government), written in Hong Kong in May 1938; printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 381-386.

²⁴ This, at least, is stated by Ye Laishi in his memories of Verda Majo which are printed as a preface to her works: *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 1-21; there p. 11.

²⁵ One of the interviews is included in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 448-452.

²⁶ Possibly, she had already aired anti-Japanese propaganda in Japanese language from Hong Kong.

biographical data and the address of her family in Tokyo. Her father was interviewed about his “wayward daughter”, who was, of course, dubbed a “communist” though her propaganda actions were under the aegis of the Guomindang.²⁷ Her father was possibly even advised in anonymous letters to commit suicide in order to save his honour.²⁸ In any case, Teru had become a *cause célèbre* in Japan and in Esperantist circles in general.

In Chongqing Liu Ren and Teru, who, apart from the name “Verda Majo”, was also known in China under the name of “Lüchuan Yingzi” 绿川英子,²⁹ at first continued their work in the Esperantist section of the propaganda department. After Teru had addressed other Japanese Esperantists from Shanghai, she now wrote an open letter to all the Esperantists in the world since, in the meantime, it had become clear that the war between Japan and China was no isolated phenomenon. A civil war was raging in Spain and in the rest of Europe the outbreak of the Second World War was only a question of time. Thus for Teru, the Anti-Japanese Resistance became part of the struggle against fascism worldwide. In this letter, Teru, for the first time, addressed the extreme brutality of Japanese troops against the Chinese civilian population, the sadistic actions against women and children, the systematic abuse, the medical experiments and the so-called “comfort women”. This was obviously the “culture” of the Japanese troops whereas the Chinese were a peace-loving people. What was happening here, according to Teru, would be soon happening in other parts of the world as well:

The whole world is now separated in two large and absolute factions: a peaceful one and an attacking one. There is no need to say it again to which one we have to belong. An intermediate position is completely impossible. How could you, unnamed combatants for peace, fall silent in such pressing times? Is the green star still shining on your chest?³⁰

²⁷ The text of the newspaper article of Nov. 1, 1938, can be found in Tone, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

²⁸ Ye Laishi mentioned that in his memories in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, p. 13.

²⁹ Under the name of “Lüchuan Yingzi”, Chinese versions of her Esperanto articles were published; they appeared mostly in the *Xinhua ribao* 新華日報 (“New China Daily”).

³⁰ “Al la tutmonda Esperantistaro” (To all the Esperantists of the world); written for Zamenhof’s birthday on December 15, 1938. Printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 387-394, there p. 391. The green star is the Esperantists’ emblem.

In the same manner as different groups in China got together and built the United Front, Esperantists from all over the world, who had been disunited because of ideological issues, should join forces as well.³¹ Teru's urge also had another reason: many of her Japanese Esperanto comrades including the husband of her sister,³² had come to terms with power holders and were by no means willing to meet the demands of her open letter from Shanghai. Teru ended her letter with the call for concrete boycotting actions against Japan, and, at least, some ideational support for the Chinese side.

In fact, the Second World War soon broke out and brought new dimensions to the war in East Asia. However, it was noticeable that the longer the war took, the more Teru's combative spirit sank. In addition to that, she and Liu Ren often fell ill. Because of tensions within the United Front, Guo Moruo, who belonged to the Communist side and ran the propaganda department including Teru's and Liu Ren's section, was removed by the Guomindang in the summer of 1940. After protests of the CCP, Guo was appointed head of the commission for cultural work and took Teru and Liu with him.³³ Teru and Liu had expressed sympathy for the Communists and thus had no good relationship to the Guomindang.³⁴ Further, Teru had a new task: she gave birth to her first child, a son.

Teru continued to write for the Esperanto magazine *Heroldo de Ĉinio*, and a first summary of some of her articles and translations appeared as *Flustr' el uragano* (Whispers out of the storm), but her most important contribution in all these years was

³¹ There had been different trends within the Esperanto movement: the main division was between self-declared neutralists and people dedicated to politics. Amongst the latter there had been also some split: some advocated an orientation towards the Soviet Union, others not. (For more information on the Esperanto movement in general, see Peter G. Forster: *The Esperanto-Movement*, The Hague 1982).

³² See Ōshima / Miyamoto *op. cit.*, pp. 285-286. Teru's elder sister, who was also an Esperantist, had met her later husband, the secretary of the Esperanto association, at an Esperanto meeting in Nagasaki in 1934 and married him afterwards.

³³ See Ye Laishi in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 14-15.

³⁴ In Teru's articles, this sympathy became visible, e.g., when she expressed a positive opinion of Mao, as in "Batalanta ili iras antaŭen" (They move forward fighting) about the film "Chinese Women", printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 420-426.

her Esperanto-translation of Ishikawa Tatsuzō's 石川 達三 *Ikiteiru heitai* 生きている兵隊 (Living soldiers).³⁵ Ishikawa (1905-1985) had achieved fame as a literary figure in Japan particularly because of the depiction of the living situation of Japanese who had immigrated into Brazil. For this work he had been even awarded the renowned Akutagawa price in 1935. In 1937, he accompanied the Japanese troops on their invasion into China as a journalist. His realistic depictions, which ended with the seizure of Nanjing in December 1937, were anything but propaganda reports for the purpose of the military leadership: he described cases of brutality and sadism, which in fact did not fit the image of the ideal smart and loyal soldier that was to be spread back home. Ishikawa's message was clear: war brutalised and everything good that had been planted into an individual during his education faded under the reality on the battlefield, where even Buddhist priests suddenly found pleasure in murdering. The well-known Japanese magazine *Chūō kōron* 中央公論 (Central Review) published Ishikawa's work in the spring of 1938. This led to several months of prison for the author and the chief editor based on the accusation of "defaming the imperial army". For Teru, however, Ishikawa's report was a ray of hope since, at least, some individual compatriots existed who dared to speak the truth. Her focus during the years of her stay in Chongqing was on the actual effect that the war had for the Japanese back home; she wrote about the sacrifices that many men and women had to make at the home front while their sons were raging on foreign territory.³⁶

When the Second World War was about to come to an end, hope revived in Teru again. Esperanto and democracy became the content of the last writings (apart from her

³⁵ The translation "Vivantaj soldatoj" appeared in 1941 and is included in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 243-366.

³⁶ See "Laboristinoj en militempa Japanio" (Women labourers in war-time Japan), originally in *Heroldo de Ĉinio* no. 6, Sept. 16, 1939. Printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 453-464; or the translation of the life report of a Japanese miner, originally published in *Heroldo de Ĉinio*, no. 50, May 1943; printed in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 486-490. Both reports address the exploitation of the working population. In "Profilo de japanaj studentoj" (Profile of the Japanese students) (*Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 413-419) of 1940 she further emphasised that the Japanese educational guidelines defrauded the Japanese youths of their youth and degraded them to mere cannon fodder.

autobiographical fragment) that remained of her.³⁷ Both Esperanto and democracy were exactly the opposite of what fascism had been propagating all these years. Teru was optimistic then that the righteous side would finally win.

For her and Liu Ren it was clear that after the retreat of the Japanese, the “righteous side” were the “liberated regions” in China under the leadership of the CCP. Teru always had sympathies for communism though it is questionable how well informed she was about it. She always wrote about the persecution of Esperantists by fascists but obviously did not know that her fellow Esperantists in Stalin’s Soviet Union were not better off at all.³⁸

The young family set off their way all through China to finally get to Manchuria, Liu’s home, but the civil war between the Guomindang and the Communist Party shattered all their hopes for a “normal life” after the retreat of the Japanese. Temporarily, the family stranded in Shanghai and then wandered all over Manchuria – chased by the civil war and without a permanent livelihood anywhere. In the meantime, Teru had given birth to her second child, a daughter. But when she became pregnant for the third time, she chose abortion under the circumstances of her unsettled conditions. Because of the poor hygienic conditions and physical emaciation, she contracted an infection and died in Jiamusi 佳木斯/Manchuria in 1947. Together with Liu Ren, who shortly after, in April 1947, also died of kidney failure, she was buried at the local “martyrs’ cemetery”. Both left-behind children were sent to an orphanage. Teru was 35 years old when she died.

³⁷“Esperanto kaj demokratio” (Esperanto and Democracy), originally in *Lernilo de Esperanto* (The learning of Esperanto), no. 11-12, Nov/Dec. 1943; and “Malfeliĉo de l’demokrata mondo” (The misfortune of the democratic world), originally in *Esperanto Revuo* (Esperanto Magazine), no. 1, May 15, 1945. (Both are included also in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 496-497 and pp. 498-501.)

³⁸ On the ideological interpretations of Esperanto and the history of persecution of Esperantists see Ulrich Lins: *La danĝera lingvo. Studo pri la persekutoj kontraŭ Esperanto* (The dangerous language. Study on the persecution of Esperanto), 2nd edition, Moscow: Progreso publishing house 1990. The abridged German version: *Die gefährliche Sprache. Die Verfolgung der Esperantisten unter Hitler und Stalin*, Gerlingen, 1988, does not include, inter alia, the part on East-Asia.

Conclusion

Hasegawa Teru's life was short and full of deprivation. Though the last ten years of her life were shaped by war, danger, illness, and alienation, she still tried to come to terms with the situation. Many times she did not have a choice but if she had one, she was obviously very determined to cut her own path despite hardships. Her sister characterised her later as “stubborn” by character. To which extent Teru really knew what was happening around her in China is very hard to estimate. She and her husband saw themselves as “simple-minded people” without any particular ambitions. Neither of them went for a career; both tried to make their own modest contribution to a matter they felt responsible for. Teru's young and political spirit gradually waned in the course of the protracted war, and what remained was partly the naïve belief in a better future – which she took with her to the grave.

After her death, she was talked up as a heroine by some, was further declared a symbol for Chinese-Japanese friendship and a true advocate of the internationalist ideals of the Esperantists. People wrote about her³⁹ and even made a film of her life in a Chinese-Japanese co-production.⁴⁰ Teru's now grown-up children and also her relatives, namely her Esperantist sister, were brought into contact as a tangible sign for the new connection between both nations. Teru's everyday reality had, however, been less glamorous. She did write but she was no great writer. She voiced appeals but was barely heard. Even some of her contemporaries, who should have resolutely stood by her, could not stop themselves from making derogatory remarks about her and her Chinese

³⁹ For a list of Chinese articles of her and about her (until 1983) see Hou Zhiping 侯志平: *Shijieyu yundong zai zhongguo* 世界語運動在中國 (The Esperanto Movement in China), Beijing 1985, pp. 156-160. The Japanese state of things (until 1980) is represented by Tone, *op. cit.* After that, Teru's family contributed to the portrayal of her by her diary notes: see Hasegawa Yone 長谷川よね and Nishimura Kōko 西村幸子: *Nikki no naka no Hasegawa Teru* 日記の中の長谷川 テル. Further articles can be found in the official journal of the Chinese Esperanto association *El popola Ĉinio* (From People's China); such as Gong Peikang: “Verda Majo en Ĉinio” (Verda Majo in China) in 1979/3, pp. 16-19; 1979/4, pp. 33-37; 1979/5, pp. 24-27; Ge Baoquan: “Rememoro pri Verda Majo, kunbatalantino de la ĉina popolo” (Memories of Verda Majo, the woman fighting with the Chinese people) in 1980/9, pp. 12-13, and 1980/10, pp. 14-16; as well as Liu Ling: “Ŝi amis ne nur sian patrion” (She did not only love her fatherland) in 1983/2, pp. 16-18.

⁴⁰ See Ge Baoquan, season 2 (*El popola Ĉinio* 1980/10, p. 15) and Tone, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

husband.⁴¹ Her husband, at least, seemed to have always stood by her. In his preface to Teru's essay collection *Flustr' el uragano* – the only writing that is known of Liu Ren – he wrote in 1941:

I confess that this little work is nothing extraordinary. It neither contains poems worth reading nor meritorious chronicles of the war (even though it was written during the war). In a word: it is very banal, extremely small and banal. But I like its banality; I love it as my own.

In terms of figures, more than four years have already passed. During the third month after our escape from the police state Japan, this big and cruel war befell us. The Shanghai bombardments drove us towards the unknown streets of Canton and closed her (=Teru) up in a black prison. Later we were expelled to a poor district of Hong Kong but we eventually managed to go to Hankou, the former centre of China's resistance. [Hankou's] fall brought us here to foggy Chongqing. During this time she was haunted by the errantry from the east to the west and from the north to the south; and poverty, illness, unrest and melancholy followed her like a shadow. This little book is just a simple memory... Maybe I am wrong if I take these for valuable memories. But I want to keep them. At the same time I am hoping that comrades from other countries learn about a Japanese woman Esperantist's life during this more than four-year-long war in China...

When I look at our photo on my desk that we took at our departure from Yokohama four-and-a-half years ago, a shiver runs down my spine. It seems as if a long, long time has passed and our faces are now scarred by suffering. How terrible this is!

The days are still foggy and gloomy like the weather around us. China still has to withstand endless waves and its bright future is still far away. We (mainly she, the Japanese Esperantist and opponent of the invasion) are carrying a heavy burden. The past four years were spent in depression: we endured eviction, misery, illness, melancholy and anger. The upcoming four years might be even more painful and troublesome.⁴²

Liu Ren's assumption proved to be right. After four years the war between the fatherlands of Teru and Liu Ren, which had overshadowed their marriage, ended finally. Japan lost the Second World War; it had to surrender unconditionally and to retreat from China. China was finally free. It had bravely put up resistance, but it had not won. In contrast, now the Chinese slaughtered each other in the civil war. In this sense, Teru as well as Liu Ren became representatives of the 'losers'. It appears almost like a symbol that both, though very young, died of illness shortly one after the other during

⁴¹ This was particularly the case with Kaji Wataru, who had also been active in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Resistance. (Cf. Ōshima / Miyamoto pp. 269-270 and p. 282. Also see Ye Laishi's comment in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, p. 4). Kaji's second wife Ikeda Kōko, whose memories of Teru are included in Tone, *op. cit.* (pp. 249-258), also distanced herself from Teru.

⁴² If. Liu (Liu Ren): "Banala memoraĵo" (Banal memory) in *Verkoj de Verda Majo*, pp. 368-370.

the civil war and had to leave their two children behind as orphans. For her third, unborn child, she had seen no future. A “successful”, or at least “banal-normal” family life had been denied to them forever.