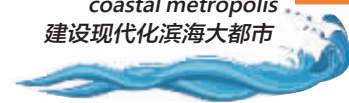


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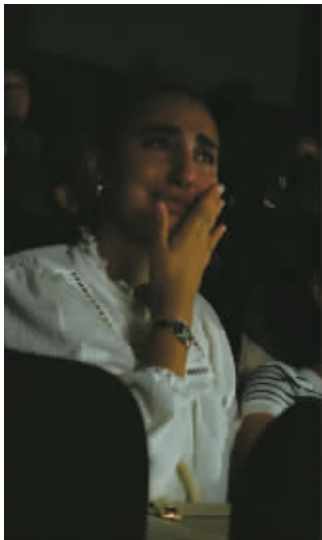


Evil Unbound Premieres, Stirring Memories of Ningbo's Plague Tragedy

Editor's Note: This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. In commemoration, this series of reports by Ningbo Evening News revisits some lesser-known wartime stories and friendships.

On September 18, *Evil Unbound (731)* premiered globally. By 7:53 p.m. that evening, its single-day box office had already exceeded 300 million yuan, setting two new records in Chinese cinema history—for both the highest single-day screenings and opening-day sales.

The brutal scenes of Japanese troops conducting human experiments with bacteria struck audiences with shocking force. For the people of Ningbo, these wounds are anything but far away—they remain memories of blood and loss at the doorstep.



International students are watching the movie.

1 Facing Scars That Never Faded

That morning, survivors of Ningbo's plague, along with their descendants, staff from the Ningbo Plague Memorial Museum, nearby residents, and international guests gathered at Mingguang Cinema to watch *Evil Unbound (731)*. Through film, they revisited the weight of history—and the fragile gift of peace.

At the intersection of Kaiming Street and Zhongshan East Road stands a brass tower-like memorial monument. It commemorates October 27, 1940, when Japanese aircraft dropped plague-infested fleas, mixed with grains and flour, onto un-

suspecting civilians. Days later, plague broke out in the Kaiming Street area, killing many residents.

Before the screening, attendees visited the Ningbo Plague Memorial Museum, where a large model reconstructs the epidemic zone based on a site map provided by survivor Hu Dingyang, who was present at the event. As one of the last living witnesses, Hu has spent decades collecting documents and evidence of the plague.

Carrying this heavy memory, the group entered the theater to confront, once more, a past that refuses to be forgotten.



Visiting the Ningbo Plague Memorial Museum.

2 Evil Unbound on Screen

Directed by Zhao Linshan and starring Jiang Wu, Wang Zhiwen, Li Naiwen, and Sun Qian, *Evil Unbound (731)* unveils the atrocities of Japan's notorious Unit 731 in Harbin's Pingfang District. Cloaked under the guise of "epidemic prevention and water supply," Unit 731 carried out horrific experiments on civilians in a desperate attempt to salvage a lost war.

Even before its release, the film had generated enormous interest. On a film review platform, it became

the most "wish-listed" film ever and surpassed 100 million yuan in pre-sales. One harrowing sequence shows Japanese forces preparing flea bombs for bacteriological warfare—attacks that historically struck Ningbo, Quzhou, and Changde, leaving behind some of the clearest evidence of these crimes.

"For us, watching this film has deep meaning," said Hu. "To remember history is to prevent future wars, so that people everywhere may live in peace."

3 International Voices

International students who attended the screening found themselves deeply shaken.

Anzaoui Nada from Morocco said, "I feel a range of emotions, including disappointment, anger, sadness and shock. How can people suffer from this? I could not watch it anymore."

"The most painful part is you know that this is real, and it was just heartbreaking. I just kept hoping that if at least somebody come rescue them. It was just so inhuman!" Lily from Botswana shared.

Neshat from Bangladesh admit-

ted she could not hold back her tears. "I was so into the movie. Maybe it was even worse than what we saw in the movie. I was just realizing, then my tears are there. I just hope the victims may rest in peace right now."

For Hakimov Muhammadjon from Tajikistan, the story was a reminder of what peace truly means. "It was painful to see the struggle Chinese people went through. The most impressive part was that even in captivity, they never gave up. We must appreciate the peace we have—and protect it."

4 Passing On the Memory

Hu's grandfather, Hu Shigui, ran a shop at No. 70 Kaiming Street. When the plague struck, four members of the family perished within days. Only Hu's mother, his uncle Hu Xianzhong, and he himself survived.

Hu Xianzhong was interviewed for *Evil Unbound (731)* before its release, recounting his childhood experience as a witness. For decades, the family has spoken publicly, repeating their testimony so the truth can never be erased.

Another attendee, Chen Weifang, represents the third generation of a family of plague victims. Her grandfather, Chen Ading, lost his nine-year-old daughter in the outbreak, when their Kaiming Street shop was contaminated.

"My aunt died after drinking water from a jar. She was gone in three days. Another shop assistant swept up wheat grains dropped from the sky and proudly told my grandmother, 'What a harvest, half a basket today.' But those grains were poisoned. He was infected and also died. That shows how terrifying the bacteria were," Chen recalled.

After watching the film, she said, "What I had only heard as family stories became painfully real on the screen. These memories are etched into our minds. Now I am telling them to my daughter, so that she will remember our history and never forgets the national humiliation. In the future, she will pass it down too."

As survivors, descendants, and international visitors came together in silence, the message was clear: memory is not just about the past—it is a duty to the future.

Acknowledgments

At the end of the film 731, special thanks were given to multiple media outlets, including the Ningbo Evening News. In gathering feedback from society, the production company, Changchun Film Group, referenced a related video from HiTangyuan.

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