

Mao Zedong's Letter to Comrade Jiang Qing¹

July 8, 1966

Jiang Qing:

Your letter from June 29th has been received. It would be best if you listened to the opinions of comrades Wei and Chen, and stay there a bit longer.² This month I have two appointments to receive foreign visitors. After this is completed, I will tell you my plans.³

I stayed in a cave⁴ in the west for over ten days after leaving Wu Lin⁵ on June 15. Information wasn't so available there. On the 28th I arrived at the place of a white cloud and yellow crane.⁶ It has already been ten days. Every day I look at material. It is all very interesting. From great chaos under heaven arises order under heaven. Every seven or eight years it happens again. The monsters and demons jump out on their own. Their actions are entirely determined by their own class nature, it is impossible for them not to jump out.

My friend's [Lin Biao's] speech⁷—the Central Committee is urging to publish it. And

1 Translation, July, 2021. For comments, questions, suggestions, or criticisms, contact us at Wengetranslators@protonmail.com.

2 This refers to Wei Wenbo (魏文伯) and Chen Pixian (陈丕显), members of the conservative revisionist camp in Shanghai. Wei was secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and secretary of the Eastern China Bureau of the CCP. Chen was the first secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and secretary of the Eastern China Bureau of the Party Central Committee, and the first political commissar of the Shanghai Garrison District Command. In 1967 they were overthrown by the masses' rebel organizations.

3 Copies of this letter examined do not have paragraph breaks. The paragraph breaks in this translation were added by the translator.

4 Referring to the Water-Dripping Cave (*dishui dong* 滴水洞) in Mao's hometown of Shaoshan, Hunan.

5 A historical name for Hangzhou

6 A reference to Wuhan, known for its famed Yellow Crane Tower, from the Tang poem by Cui Hao (崔颢), "Once gone, the yellow crane will never on earth alight; Only white clouds still float in vain from year to year" (白云千载空悠悠 / 黄鹤一去不复返).

7 My friend's [Lin Biao's] speech" refers to Lin Biao's so-called "Lecture on the Scriptures on the *Coup d'état*" at the meeting of the Politburo on May 18, 1966, which focused on coups in both modern and ancient times, in China and abroad. Chairman Mao pointed out that "Lin Biao relied on the forged *On Distinguishing Traitors* [*Bianjie Lun* 辨奸论, a Song Dynasty Text] to start with. In this speech Lin Biao said "*Coup d'états* are now a trend, a worldwide trend. The change of political power generally occurs in the following ways: One is a people's revolution, which is a rebellion from the bottom. Such [cases] as Chen Sheng (陈胜), Wu Guang (吴广), the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and our Communist Party were like this; One is a counter-revolutionary coup. Most of the counter-revolutionary coups are palace coups. Coups emerge internally, some are combined with subversive activities or with armed offensives of foreign enemies, and some are combined with natural disasters, massive bombings, chaos, and riots. In history things were like this, and it is the same now... There is such a saying in *On Distinguishing Traitors* in *The Finest of Ancient Prose*: "You can know the work when you see the smallest sign. Wind follows the appearance of a halo around the moon, and rain follows the moisture on the foundation of a building." There are signs in advanced of bad things. Any essential thing is reflected by phenomena. Recently, there have been many conspiracies and intrigues that need to be paid

I plan to agree to publish it. His speech was devoted specifically to the subject of coups. On this question, there has been no such talk in the past. Some of his methods always leave me unsettled.

I have never believed that those booklets of mine have that sort of magical power. Now if he praises to the sky, the whole party and country do so too.⁸ It is like Wang Po selling melons, selling them and praising them.⁹ I have been forced by them to ascend Liang Mountain.¹⁰ It seems it won't do to disagree with them.

To agree with others on big questions despite my inclinations—this is the first time in my life [I have done so]. This is what is called something that is not determined by human will.

Ruan Ji¹¹ of the Jin Dynasty objected to Liu Bang.¹² He [Ruan] went from Luoyang to Chenggong, and proclaimed “The lack of heroes in the world allows those without ability to gain fame.” Lu Xun once said the same thing about his own essays.¹³ I am of

attention to. There may be counter-revolutionary coups, murders, the usurpation of power, bourgeois restoration, and the subversion of socialism." We can see that Lin Biao used the forged *On Distinguishing Traitors* (forged by landlord class Confucians to attack the Legalist Wang Anshi during the Song Dynasty) as his theoretical basis, metaphysically listing examples of coups from throughout history and then idealistically concluding that coups are a broad historical trend of world history. He distorted the history of class struggle, presenting it as a history of struggles for power among the few within the ruling class, thus promoting historical idealism. During the Criticize Confucius, Criticize Lin Biao campaign, several articles analyzed this issue. In 1972 it was discovered that Lin Biao's collection of coups, ancient and modern, at home and abroad, was also used for preparing his own counter-revolutionary coup. Lin Ligu, Lin Biao's son, concocted the counter-revolutionary coup plan *Outline of the Project "571"*. Lin preached in his speeches that, "With political power, everything will be gained. Without political power, everything will be lost." "Power is the power to suppress." Relatedly, Chairman Mao also stated “The correctness or otherwise of the ideological and political line decides everything. When the Party’s line is correct, then everything will come its way. If it has no followers, then it can have followers; if it has no guns, then it can have guns; if it has no political power, then it can have political power. If its line is not correct, even what it has it may lose. The line is a net rope. When it is pulled, the whole net opens out.” (https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv_898.htm) And “Going against the tide is a Marxist-Leninist principle” (https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/10th_congress_report.htm), (*fan chaoliu shi Mao Lie zhuyi de yige yuanze* 反潮流是马列主义的一个原则).

8 For examples of Mao’s many repudiations of this practice, see the translation of “A Few Opinions of Mine” on Bannedthought.net regarding Mao’s criticisms of Chen Boda and Lin Biao’s “genius theory.” See also “Central Committee Document Series 67, Number 219, July 5, 1967” on Bannedthought.net regarding the attempts of Chairman Mao and the Central Committee to restrain the mass production of statues and other symbols of Chairman Mao during the GPCR.

9 An allegory expressing the idea of “tooting one’s own horn.”

10 A reference to the righteous outlaws who dwell in Liang Mountain, from the Chinese classic, *Water Margin* (*Shui Hu Zhuan* 水浒传).

11 A famed scholar of the Jin Dynasty (265-419 AD).

12 Liu Bang was the first emperor of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), and folk-hero.

13 Lu Xun referenced this line in the afterword to his work *Let’s Speak of the Wind and Moon* 淮风月谈 (*淮风月谈*) when discussing the acclaim generated by his writings: “Time passes one day after another, and big and small things also pass alongside. Before long, they disappear from our memory. What’s more, such things are all scattered, hence from my own perspective I really don’t

the same mind as Lu Xun. I like that sort of frankness of his. He said he would dissect¹⁴ himself more severely than when dissecting others. After having taken several spills, I also tend to do as he did. But comrades generally don't believe [in doing so]. I am confident, but also have a certain lack of confidence.

In my youth I once said that I believed I would live 200 years, and ride the waves for 3,000 li.¹⁵ I seemed to be quite arrogant. But I doubt myself, and overall believe that like in a mountain without tigers, the monkey is called a king, and I also became this sort of king. But this [contradictory assessment] is not [a form of] eclecticism.¹⁶ I have something of a tiger's nature, this is primary, I also have something of a monkey's nature, second in importance to that. I once brought forward the several lines Li Gu of the late Han Dynasty [(221–206 BC)] wrote to Huang Qiong, "What is tall is easily broken, what is pure is easily stained. Those who are able to perform the "White Snow in Spring"¹⁷ are quite few in number. When one is famous, it is difficult to match one's reputation." The last two phrases really refer to me.

I once read these lines at one of the meetings of the standing committee of the politburo. It is important to know oneself. In April of this year at the Hangzhou Conference, I expressed my difference with that sort of pronouncement [of Lin Biao's].¹⁸ But what was the use? When he went to Beijing, at the May conference [of 1966], he still spoke that way, and the press even more fiercely so, simply exaggerating to the point of fantasy. As such, I could only ascend Liang Mountain.¹⁹ I guess their real intention is to use a Zhong Kui²⁰ to attack ghosts, I truly have served

know how many things I have not perceived, and not known. And yet about such matters I wrote down ten or so essays, added some parallels, and also made use of an "afterword" in order to patch up the resulting clashes. At the same time, when projected onto current affairs, the patterns of the events observed were minimal. So should an impression or two also be described? Furthermore, now there are very few authors who dare to lower themselves enough to gaze on the respected faces of Shakespeare and Tolstoy, to look into the shadows and write a few lines. As a result I want more-so to preserve my mixed feelings and in doing so allow them to exist to a greater extent. Although the result is I receive more disdain from people, under siege more growth is achieved. Alas, "the lack of heroes in the world allows those without ability to gain fame," this is something I and China's literary works should be indignant about."

14 Jiepou (解剖), i.e. to analyze.

15 A reference to the philosopher Zhuangzi's tale of a mythical kun fish, that desired to see the world, and transformed into the mythical peng bird, who saw distant seas. Li is a form of Chinese measurement, equivalent to about .5 kilometers. Mao wrote this line in a 7-character poetic fragment in 1916.

16 This relates to Chairman Mao's dialectic of "one divides into two" as opposed to revisionist eclecticism of two divides into one. The critique of Liu Shaoqi and Yang Xianzhen's "two divides into one" theory was an important achievement of the GPCR.

17 Yangchun baixue 阳春白雪, a notoriously difficult song to perform from the state of Chu.

18 This refers to Lin's actions, including his promotion of the *Quotations of Chairman Mao Tsetung* (known in the west as the Little Red Book), and Lin's "Genius Theory" in which he referred to Mao as a genius that only comes around every few thousand years.

19 Ascending to Liang Mountain refers to the classic work *Water Margin*, in which the only recourse of the tale's outlaws is to join a rebel army on Liang Mountain.

20 Zhong Kui (鍾馗) is a figure in Chinese mythology and folk religion who vanquishes ghosts. His face is often painted on gates and doors to prevent evil spirits from passing through, much like a scarecrow, but for ghosts.

as the Communist Party's Zhong Kui in the 60's of the 20th century.²¹

Objects all must go towards [their] opposite side. The more the praise, the heavier the fall. I am preparing to fall and be broken to pieces. That is no worry. Matter cannot be destroyed, but it is shattered into pieces. The whole world has over 100 [communist] parties. Most of the parties don't believe in Marxism-Leninism. [These] people have also beaten Marx and Lenin into pieces, so what of us?²² I urge you to pay attention to this question. Do not become dizzy in your head from victory. Frequently think of your weaknesses, shortcomings, and mistakes.

I have talked with you about this question so many times that I don't know the count. You do still remember, that in April, in Shanghai this was discussed as well.

The above writing, often has what approaches black words. Do not some anti-party elements speak in just this sort of way? But they want to completely defeat our party and myself. I am but speaking in regard to my own role—about which I think there are a few formulations that are not reasonable.²³ This is the difference between me and the black gang.

This matter can not be made public at present. The entire left and the broad masses all are speaking in this way.²⁴ Making it public would pour cold water on them, and help the right. And the present task is for the entire party and country to achieve a general defeat (it can not be a complete one) of the right, and then in seven or eight years to have another movement for sweeping away the monsters and demons, and after there will be more sweeping. Therefore, these nearly black words of mine cannot be made public now. When they will be made public cannot be ascertained at present, because the left and the broad masses do not welcome this sort of talk. Perhaps on some occasion after I die, when the right comes to power, it will be made public through them. They will use this sort of method of talking of mine to attempt to forever raise the black flag.²⁵ But in doing so they then will suffer.

In China, since the overthrow of the emperor in 1911, no reactionary has been able to stay in power long. The one who ruled longest (Chiang Kai-shek) did so for only 20

21 In Lin Biao's counter-revolutionary "Project 571 Outline," for his coup attempt, Lin talked about the counter-revolutionary strategy "Defeating the forces of B-52 under the banner of B-52," (B-52 is what Lin's son, Lin Liguang used to disparagingly refer to Chairman Mao). We see here an example of the way the revisionists tried to make use of the theme of Zhong Kui in their plots.

22 I.e. forget about what will happen to us, look what they have done already, even to Marx and Lenin!

23 This refers to formulations related to the practice of "praising to the sky," described earlier in this letter.

24 Including the promotion of the use of the Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

25 Referring to Mao's comments that "Objects all must go towards [their] opposite side. . The more the praise, the heavier the fall. I am preparing to fall and be broken to pieces. That is no worry. Matter cannot be destroyed, but it is shattered into pieces. The whole world has over 100 [communist] parties. Most of the parties don't believe in Marxism-Leninism. [These] people have also beaten Marx and Lenin into pieces, so what of us?"

years, but he, too, fell once the people rose in revolt. Chiang Kai-shek climbed to power by taking advantage of Sun Yat-sen's trust in him and by running the Whampoa Academy and gathering a big bunch of reactionaries around him. As soon as he turned against the Communist Party, practically the whole landlord class and bourgeoisie came to his support. Moreover, the Communist Party was inexperienced at the time. So, he gleefully gained ascendancy for a while. In those 20 years, however, he never achieved unification. There were the war between the Nationalist and the Communist parties, the wars between the Nationalist Party and the various warlord cliques, the Sino-Japanese war and, finally, the four years of large-scale civil war, which sent him scampering off to a cluster of islands. If the Rightists stage an anti-Communist coup d'etat in China, I am sure they will know no peace either and their rule will most probably be short-lived because it will not be tolerated by the revolutionaries, who represent the interests of the people making up more than 90 per cent of the population.

This time, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, is a serious maneuver. There are some regions (for example Beijing) where things are deep-rooted, and where things toppled within a day. In some apparatuses, (for example, Peking University, Tsinghua University), tree roots are intermixed together²⁶ and there was a quick collapse. Wherever the rightists are arrogant, they are defeated and then their downfall is even more miserable, and the left then gains in strength. This is a nationwide maneuver in which the left, right, and wavering unstable middle factions, all will acquire their own respective lessons. The conclusion is still the two familiar comments: The future is bright; the road is tortuous.

Mao Zedong

July 8, 1966

26 Meaning a difficult and confused situation.