

Mao Zedong's Private Letter to Jiang Qing: July 8, 1966

Jiang Qing:

Your letter from June 29th has been received. It would be best if you listened to comrades Zhao and Chen's opinions, and stay there a bit longer. This month I have two appointments to receive foreign visitors. After this is completed, I will tell you my plans.¹

I stayed in a cave in the west for over ten days after leaving Wu Lin on June 15. Information wasn't so available there. On the 28th I arrived at the white cloud yellow crane place. 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 determined by their own class nature, it is impossible for them not to jump out.

Our friend's [Lin Biao's] speech—the center is urging to publish it. And I plan to agree to publish it. He speaks specifically on the subject of coups. On this question, there has been no such talk in the past. The way he brings certain things up makes me feel unsettled overall.

I have never believed that those booklets of mine have that sort of spiritual power. Now if he praises to the sky, the whole party and country do so too. It is like Wang Po selling melons, selling them and praising them.² I have been forced by them to ascend Liang Mountain,³ 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.

In the Jin Dynasty, Yuan Ji opposed Liu Bang. He 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. I am of the same mind as Lu Xun. I like that sort of frankness of his. He said he would dissect [and analyze] 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*.⁴ 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 [these contradictory assessments] is not [a form of] eclecticism. 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” are

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

2 An allegory expressing the idea of “tooting one's own horn.”

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

4 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 quoted this in a 1917 essay, as a student, during a period of revolutionary organizing in Hunan.

quite few in number.⁵ When one is famous, it is difficult to match one's reputation." The last two phrases really refer to me.⁶

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]. But what was the use? When he went to Beijing, at the May conference, 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. I guess their real intention is to use a Zhong Kui to attack ghosts, I truly have served as the Communist Party's Zhong Kui in the 60's of the 20th century.⁷

Objects all must go towards the opposite side. The more the praise, the heavier the fall. I am preparing to fall and be broken to pieces. That is no worry. The matter cannot be destroyed. But beaten into pieces [I] will be. The whole world has over 100 [communist] parties. Most of the parties don't believe in Marxism-Leninism. [These] people have [even] beaten Marx and Lenin into pieces, *so what* about [how are treated, or will be treated] we?⁸ 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 how many times. 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.⁹ 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 of this opinion. Making it public would pour cold water on them, and help the right. And the present task is 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 need to be more sweeping. Therefore, these nearly black words of mine cannot be made public now. When they will be made public cannot be ascertained now, 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. But doing it this way, they then will suffer [as a result].

Since the defeat of the emperor in 1911, the reactionaries have not been able to hold power for long. The longest period did not exceed 20 years (Chang Kaishek), when the people rebelled, he also fell. Chang Kaishek used Sun Yatsen's trust in him to establish another Whampoa Academy, and he collected a large number of reactionaries.¹⁰ In this way, he rose up. As soon as he opposed the

5 A notoriously difficult song to perform from the state of Chu.

6 The two phrases likely refer to the two clauses of the underlined sentence.

7 Zhong Kui 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.

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

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

10 The first Whampoa Academy was a military school founded in 1924 and jointly run by the Communist and Nationalist parties. Following Chang Kaishek's April 12, 1927 counter-revolutionary coup d'état, communists were purged from the academy, and it was reestablished under the sole jurisdiction of the Nationalist Party.

communists, almost the entire landlord and capitalist classes supported him. At that time, the Communist Party did not have experience. Therefore, he happily achieved temporary power. But in the course of these 20 years, he did not achieve total unification. [There was] the war between the Nationalist and Communist parties, the war between the Nationalist Party and various factions of warlords, the Sino-Japanese War, and the final four years of civil war. Then he beat-it—to a group of islands in the ocean.

If a rightist, anti-communist coup occurs in China, my conclusion is they will not have peace, and it is quite possible that it will be short-lived. This is because all the revolutionaries, who represent the interest of more than 90% of the people, will not tolerate it. At that time, the right will possibly use my words to secure power for some time, and the left then will definitely use other of my words, organize, and defeat the right.

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 together [i.e. there is a difficult and confused situation], and there was a quick collapse. Wherever the rightists are arrogant, they are defeated and then they are ever 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. Conclusion: The future is bright, the road is tortuous—still these two old sayings.

It's been awhile without sending a letter, and one letter then is very long, talk again next time!

Mao Zedong

July 8, 1966