

Beloved China

by Fang Zhimin, 1935

Dear friends, finally, I am in the hands of the enemy. Newspapers will convey the rough circumstances of my capture, so there is no need to describe it in much detail in this letter. The captors bound me with ropes, shackled my feet, took numerous photos of me, transported me in an armored truck, showed me to the public several times, and even locked me into a cage. ...Such events would not have been out of place in films. I'd prefer not to recall them, as doing so would only aggravate my unbearable shame and distress. I do not intend to tell you about my life in prison. Friends, no matter who is in prison, he will inevitably suffer sorrow and humiliation. I am suffering more than most. I am sorry to be unable to report any decent news. What I wish to relate today is another important issue: How can we love China and how can we save her? Perhaps you'd like to listen to my thoughts about this. Since my imprisonment, many people have visited me. The reasons for their visits are, perhaps, like the curiosity people have when visiting the zoo to catch sight of a bizarre new creature. I do not know, and have no need to know, what they say about me behind my back. According to what they have said to my face, they admit I am a revolutionary. However, they think I only pay attention to the interests of workers and peasants, yet ignore the interests of the nation, as if I did not love China as a nation.

Friends, surely one cannot believe such nonsense. Do the interests of workers and peasants conflict with the interests of the country? No, certainly not. It is those who commit themselves to the liberty of workers and peasants that commit themselves to the liberty of the nation. It is so unfair to identify me as someone who does not love China as a nation. When I was younger, I attended a private school in the countryside. At that time, I had no idea what imperialism was or how it had degraded China. Neither did I fully understand the meaning of patriotism. Later, when I entered a higher primary school, I acquired more knowledge and began to understand what it

really meant to love one's country. As the stirrings of patriotism spread to our higher primary school in 1919 (*the May Fourth Movement*), rallies were held by us students. There were several hundred of us students at the rally, all filled with hatred for the insatiably aggressive plans of the Japanese imperialists, and even stronger hatred for shameless traitors like Cao Rulin and Zhang Zongxiang. The young teachers were as infuriated as the students (old teachers paid little attention to the patriotic movement).

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(p.19) A schoolboy's love for his country is as pure as a girl's passion when she falls in love for the first time. Guess what, friends? Instead of entering a military academy, or going into business, after graduating from higher primary school, I went to study in Nanchang, a provincial capital quite different from a country town. There I saw many foreigners and had various unpleasant experiences. Let me tell you a few instances.

In any stroll through town, you are likely to come across a couple of foreigners. It goes without saying that we are not xenophobic as there are many well-informed and principled foreigners who sympathise with the Chinese people's movement for national liberation, and who are our friends. However, some come to China to make money and pursue a comfortable lifestyle, or, to spread spiritual opium by preaching Christianity. Foreigners of this kind are quite detestable. They consider themselves a superior, more civilised race while considering us Chinese a barbarous and inferior race. It always infuriates me to see the way they swagger around, obviously looking down on all Chinese. I used to ask myself: "Are we Chinese really an inferior race? Do we deserve to be scorned? I am positive that this is not the case, never.'

(p.27) My friends, I have concluded that, in Shanghai, it is best to stay cooped up quietly in small attics. If you run around outdoors or stroll through the foreign concessions, which are 'states within a state', you will encounter too much that provokes you. Everywhere, you can see arrogant foreign 'gentlemen' striking rickshaw men and coolies with their sticks, drunken sailors brawling in the streets, or policemen

beating the poor wretches with their truncheons. If you go near one of the so-called 'Western jails', you can hear the groans and cries of our fellow countrymen being tortured by the foreign police, who use their extraterritorial powers to punish those who dare oppose them. Such is the wretched fate of the people in a semi-colonial country, the wretched fate of our poor nation!

(p.41) Although the physical pain was only felt by their bodies (laborers), the shame was on ALL Chinese people! Oh! Friends! Is the status of a Chinese citizen even lower than that of an animal? Don't you also feel aggrieved, my friends, after hearing this tale?

Unfortunately, I have observed further outrages since that incident. There are numerous incidents to disclose. It would take many days to relate them all. I truly cannot bear to recount such painful memories. Anyhow, China, as a partial colony, must suffer countless indignities and we Chinese are looked down upon by foreign eyes. But, friends, each event of this ilk boosts my resolve to fight for the liberation of the Chinese nation, even if it is the only thing I ever do. It always occurs to me that if a trivial man like myself can strive to liberate the Chinese nation, then I should relentlessly pursue this goal, even if it means loss of my own life! China is our venerable mother country, friends. Don't you think she is lovely? I'm sure that we are of the same opinion, thinking she is really, truly lovely. Her fine climate, neither too hot nor too cold, is her nurturing comfort that encourages her offspring to settle close to her. Her vast territory is akin to a motherly figure, grand and burly, unlike the svelte Japanese girl. Her tall mountains and mighty rivers are the contours of her shapely physique; her lakes of various sizes are the dimples on her skin. She has limitless productive potential and a wealth of minerals yet to be quarried. These natural resources are indicative of her plentiful milk and absolute capacity to raise and nurture her four hundred million children. I can think of no other nation on the planet with as large a populace as her. As for her scenic landscape, the lofty Emei Mountains, the charming West Lake, the enchanting Yandang Mountains and the

superb Guilin scenery all stand out and win admiration worldwide. As a matter of fact, I believe there is no location in China, be it a town or village, hill or stream, even a mound or ravine, that would not become a scenic attraction with attentive development. Our mother is a real stunner; every part of her is endowed with breathtaking beauty. The coastline of China is long and curvy, which must be considered her shapely contours in the eyes of contemporary artists. Oh, mother! Our beautiful and lovely mother, you have been hard-pressed and exploited for such a long period of time. Now, you cannot even afford new clothes to dress up or a bar of soap to cleanse your body: This is why you appear so run-down, scruffy, and untidy. Yes, our poor mother born of dazzling beauty, has been reduced to penury. She cannot compare to those fine Western ladies and would even feel inferior in the presence of the Japanese girl. Listen, friends! Our mother is sobbing and heartbroken, and I seem to hear her lamenting: 'Have I given life to my four hundred million children for nothing? Has some spell been cast over them that forces a collective stupor? Why can't they stand as one? That way, they would have the strength to battle the enemies who have been ravaging and exploiting their mother. Don't they wish to save their mother and decorate her so she can present herself as distinguished and highly respected?' Do you hear our mother's outcry, friends? She absolutely has reason to curse us! We bring her scorn upon ourselves. There are reprobates among us who oppress their own people so much that we can only look on while our gentle, beautiful mother is being humiliated and demeaned. We, as her children, should feel ashamed for failing to protect her! Look, friends, how evil these imperialists are! No ogre or demon in Chinese folklore comes close to being as brutal as these hairy apes. When they open their big, blood-flecked mouths, they devour countless people. Their sharp, jutting fangs look terrifying. Instead of hands, these imperialists have talons as strong as steel. How repulsive and disgusting these devils are! One, two, three, four, five: Friends, there are five horrible devils! (*the United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, and Italy*) Now, friends, all of them are threatening our mother. Do you see their atrocities? Bah! They grip her in their arms and force their bloody mouths against her lips and cheeks, roughly scratching her breasts and delicate skin. Notice

what that devil in a white mask does! He has thrust a golden tube into her heart and is feverishly sucking out her blood. Her lips have turned pale with grief. The other devils follow suit! Look! To drain her blood with all their might, they have taken out tubes made of gold, iron, or rubber and plunged them into the wounds they caused. Mother, wouldn't these devils completely suck up all your blood in no time? Hey! That diminutive devil is wielding a carving knife! What does he want to do now? Damn you! Do you want to slice our mother's flesh, devil?! Do you mean to slay her?! The merciless beast has slashed at our mother's left shoulder, tearing off her left arm, neck and breast! Already, he has torn off a fifth of her entire body! Our mother's blood is streaming out, but she does not cry out loud as her tears have mingled with her blood. Friends, brothers! Save our mother! Else, she will perish! Ah! That dwarf demon is so evil! After devouring much of our mother's body, he still bears the look of a ravenous tiger. Do you want to maul our mother, you devil, so that you can devour her entirely? How can our mother still look human with a fifth of her body sliced off? Brothers, we must act swiftly to thwart this devil! This predator is tearing our exquisite mother up, limb by limb, leaving her crippled and bloodstained. Brothers, we must stop him! Attack this monster and thrash him with an iron fist until he disgorges our mother's flesh! At all costs, he must be stopped from digesting her flesh and thriving on it! We must make our mother whole again. We must not let her be dismembered! Damn! Who are those people? Are they not Chinese and our mother's offspring? If so, why do they choose to collude with the devils to murder their own mother? Look! When the devil slashes with his knife, they then seize the hacked flesh, thrust it into his bloody mouth, then pat down his throat to help him wolf it down. Next they massage his stomach to aid digestion. But how could these 'Chinese elites' so servilely fawn on the devils? To ingratiate themselves with these devils, they so itch to put on a nauseating show! These appalling leeches are shameless, completely shameless! They are puppets and quislings - the lowest grade of trash. What do you gain by facilitating the devil's murder of your own mother and brothers? I have a message for you running dogs: When the devil has consumed our mother's flesh and blood, you will only get to stoop low at the evil's anus and wait to lick the shit and

urine he discharges! What a despicable fate! Attention, friends! The other devils have also drawn knives and are coveting our mother's body. Are they going to carve her up like the midget did? If so, she will not survive. If they take her life, we will become wretched orphans. Then, we will suffer even worse bullying and humiliation. Friends, brothers, act now to save our mother! We cannot just sit by and watch her die! My friends, please do not assume I am talking nonsense! I am calling upon you to save our mother! There can be no delay. Otherwise, we will face her death sooner rather than later. Friends, hurry to take action to prevent China's fall and annihilation! Save our dying mother from the claws of the imperialist devils! There is no time to waste.

How can we save her? Do we appoint a few of our finest authors to compose a tactful, appeasing statement or plea to dissuade these devils from subjugating us? Do we choose some skilled, articulate diplomats to parley with them, so they will relinquish their butcher's knives and stop dismembering China? What if we select some lachrymose individuals to form a delegation to kneel before the devils and wail, nonstop, for seven days and nights. Could we then appeal to their better nature to spare China? Whatever we do, there is no point in me carrying on listing more methods because, realistically, none of them will work. To entreat the imperialists not to conquer China is no different than begging a tiger to stop preying on other animals. There is nothing more absurd. Pleading, kowtowing, and sobbing cannot, and will not, help our nation gain liberation and freedom. The only salvation for our motherland is to call upon all Chinese people to take up arms and wage a national revolutionary war to force the imperialists out. This is the only solution for China. Don't you agree, friends? As China has been defeated in several conflicts, many of us have lost confidence in ourselves. Some Chinese people are no longer confident about the future of the Chinese nation.

(p. 65) Ah, foreign ships with Chinese bulletins giving the 'orders of the day'. Due to the struggle of the Chinese people, including soldiers and workers, the canes, bamboo pieces and ropes have lost their past power! Unfortunately, friends, about that time,

misfortunes struck China one after another. First, there was the 'May 3rd Jinan Massacre' of 1928. Then, came the 'September 18th Incident of 1931, following which the Japanese imperialist troops occupied all four provinces of Northeast China. As I stated above, this 'evil dwarf wielded a knife, slicing off a fifth of our mother's body and swallowing it. This was the result of the Chinese National Revolutionary Movement having been bogged down by frustration. It was also the result of the government's 'no resistance' policy towards Japan's aggression and its failure to call on the Chinese people for self-defense. Yet, friends, because of these unfortunate events, there was a nationwide surge of anti-Japanese sentiment. Brave men in the four Northeastern provinces took up arms, and, in Shanghai, the January 28th Battle' occurred in 1932. The arrogant Japanese warlords were taught a hard lesson, and the battle showed the world that the Chinese citizens and soldiers are neither barbarians nor savages, but patriots who will fight and die for their country. Who could even begin to imagine swallowing the Chinese nation, with its 4,000-year history and four hundred million people? We will engage them in a ferocious fight till the last man among us dies! Friends, although among us there are traitors and puppets who see the enemies as their father and act as their pawns, this shameful class is only a minority that has been criticised and rejected by real Chinese people. Eventually, they will face a grisly end to their lives. Most Chinese citizens still have great national fervour and adore our country. Aren't there numerous people fighting bravely for our country? They will never let China be conquered by imperialism or let her children be enslaved by the aggressors. Friends, our Chinese nation must be rescued from its plight. This is not self-deception, is it? Yes, right now, China may be a broken country, a country in which the penurious people suffer. But one simply cannot argue that China does not have a bright future. No, please do not make this assumption. We believe that China will have a positive and praiseworthy future for sure. The Chinese people had built the Great Wall long ago and dug thousands of miles of canals, exhibiting China's greatness and unparalleled creativity. Once China succeeds in her fight to smash the shackle of imperialism and root out the traitors, once she achieves freedom and liberation, this innate creativity will explode without limits. One day, China will be

embraced by transformation and modernization, the poverty and famine, chaos and strife, hunger and cold, disease and pestilence, superstition and ignorance, and that chronic opium poison which is now slowly killing the Chinese nation-what an odious imperialist gift-will end once imperialism is defeated. Then, with widespread creative activity, there will be rapid progress with each passing day. Singing will replace lamenting and smiling faces will replace sorrowful ones. Wealth will replace poverty and health will supplant disease. Wisdom will trump ignorance, love will replace hatred, and joy and life will thrive in lieu of sadness and death. A sunny vista will replace the bleak wasteland we see now! When this day comes, our nation, our mother, will stand on equal footing with other nations in beautiful harmony. What a glorious day that will be. It is a day that will arrive very soon. We should truly believe this, my friends! Friends, at this point, you are probably getting tired of hearing my words. However, I can assure you, in all honesty, that my love towards China is still as sincere and pure as it was in my primary school days. My resolve to defeat imperialism for the liberation of China blazes like fire. Yet, I am just a prisoner now. I no longer have an opportunity to fight for our people. Today, as I write this letter, I feel a burning passion for our country. I use my words as my dying cries for China, although my cries sound very weak, like the dying whine of a bird. Ah! Though I am not currently able to fight on behalf of China and our people, I still pray, day and night, for China's successful liberation from imperialist exploitation. If I can survive imprisonment, I will call out for China every day of my life. If I do not have much time remaining, meaning if I perish, then in the place where my body bleeds or my bones are laid, an adorable flower may grow. Please regard this as the sustenance of my spirit! If that flower nods its head in the breeze, it represents a salute to my comrades and all the men who are struggling for our nation. If that flower sways left and right, it is me singing revolutionary songs, hopefully, encouraging our soldiers to greater efforts! My dear friends, please do not feel pessimistic or downhearted. Keep on striving! Carry forth an abiding and arduous struggle! Please devote all your knowledge and talent to the struggle to save our nation! We cannot permit our gorgeous mother to perish in the hands of the filthy imperialists!