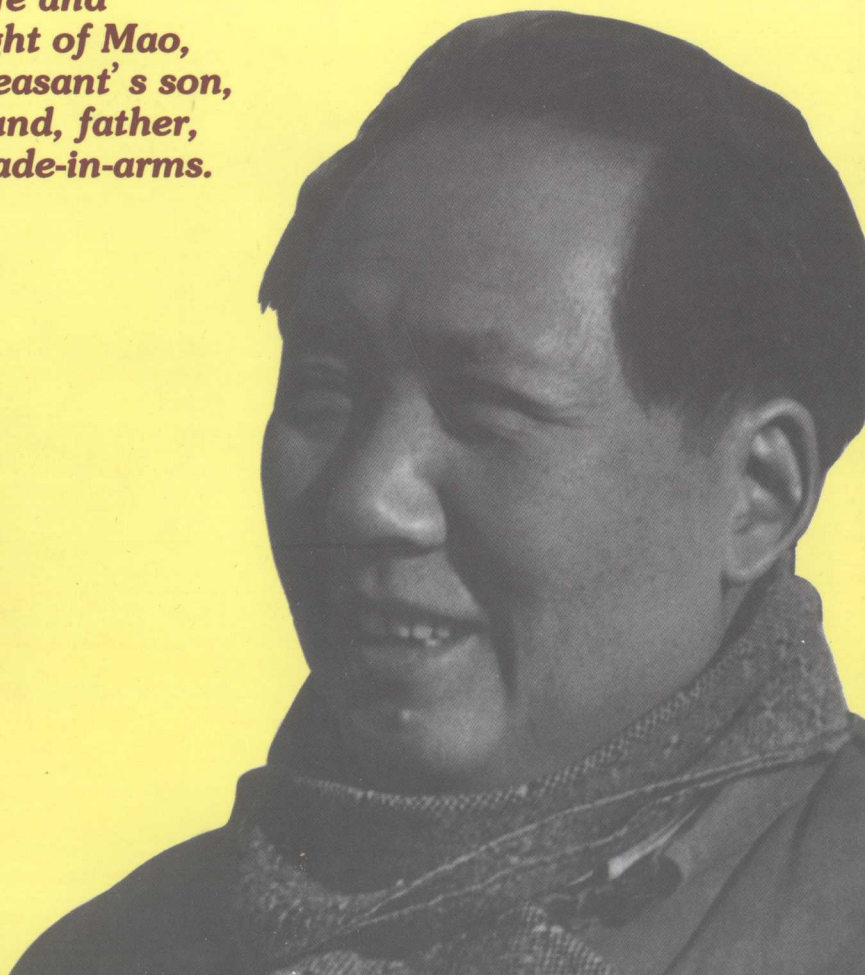


MAO ZEDONG

Man, Not God

*The inside story
of China's dynamic
leader and
world statesman—
the life and
thought of Mao,
the peasant's son,
husband, father,
comrade-in-arms.*

By Quan Yanchi



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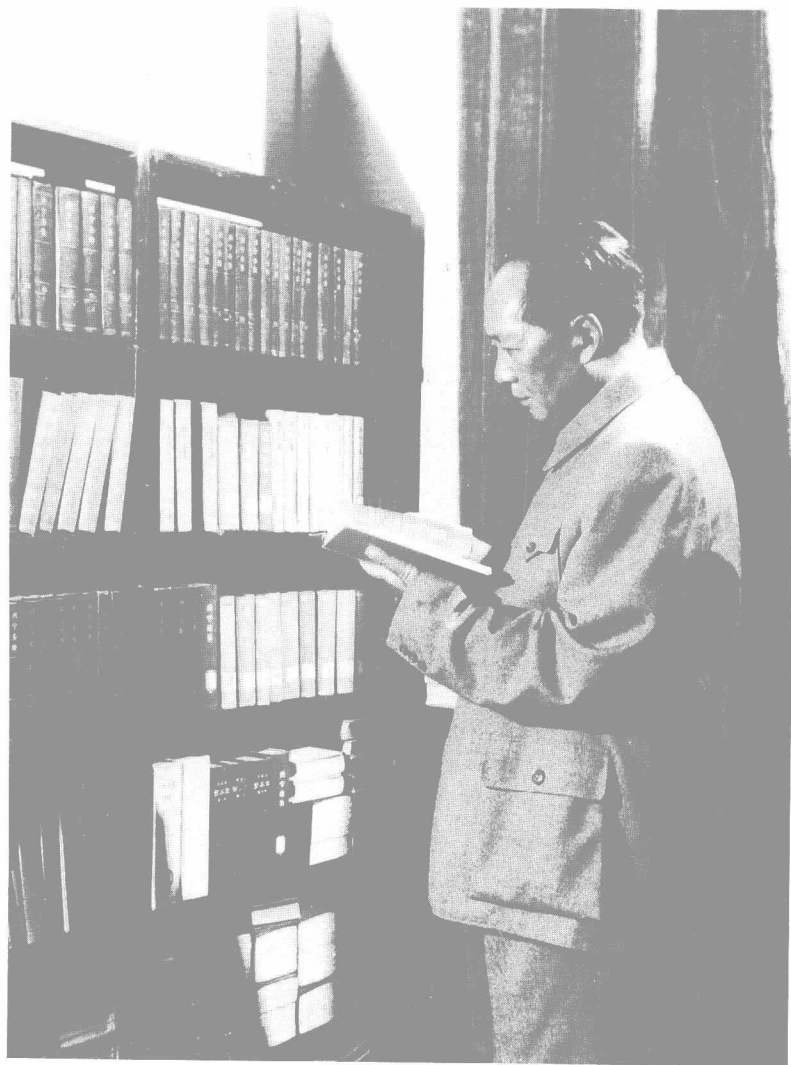
Mao Zedong with Li Yinqiao and his family



Mao with his daughter Li Ne



Mao with his relatives



Mao in his study

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Publisher's Note

MAO ZEDONG: *Man, Not God* by Quan Yanchi, is based on the recollections of Li Yinqiao. Li, Mao's bodyguard for many years, once received this request from Mao: "If what happens in my family is a secret to others, it is not a secret to you. But don't write about me while I'm still alive; wait until I die, and write truthfully when you do."

This is a candid book about a statesman of world fame, recording truthfully the life and thoughts of Mao as a husband, father, comrade-in-arms, the peasant's son. In entertaining anecdotes it captures moments of joy and sorrow in the life of this outstanding national leader. Since most of the contents of this book have never before been made public, it will provide the reader with a refreshingly different perspective from any other works about Mao. It is a book which will not disappoint anyone who desires to know more about this great man.

Highlighting the book are photographs, published here for the first time.

Preface

Li Yinqiao worked for Mao Zedong for fifteen years, first as a plain bodyguard and later as a section leader, then deputy-commander and finally, commander of Mao's bodyguard. Mao once said to him, "If what happens in my family is a secret to others, it is not a secret to you," adding, "but don't write about me while I'm still alive; wait until I die, and write truthfully when you do." When Li was leaving Mao in 1962, Mao told him, "I'm not going to have any new bodyguard commander after you. I've been able to keep you for so long because we got along well with each other. I'm not going to find a replacement after you leave." So Li was the last to command Mao's bodyguard.

As a friend of Li's, enjoying his trust, I sent him a list of questions about Mao Zedong, but I was not sure he would answer them. Some of them asked about Mao's likes, dislikes, fears, and if Li had seen Mao throw a tantrum or quarrel with anyone—questions he might find too embarrassing to answer, but questions, nevertheless, whose answers, I believed, people were as eager to know as I was.

However I was wrong. In response to my questions, the former commander of Mao's bodyguard recalled to the best of his ability his days with Mao, answering without reservation. As I listened to his answers, my image of Mao grew fuller, sharper and more life-like, an image that strengthened my belief that Mao is the greatest man China has produced in this century.

Li was not the only one to whom I addressed my questions. My interviewees included more than a dozen others who had at some time worked for Mao and were now working in various places all over the country. They responded to my questions with no less enthusiasm than did Li, but Li remained the most important of them all in answering my inquiries.

When recalling in old age, his numerous experiences, Li, like any other veteran revolutionary, may have erred with respect of details as to

people, events, times and places. But what readers will find in this book is nevertheless a truthful record of the enormous contributions made by a great man to history.

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How I Became Mao's Bodyguard

It would be impossible to explain in just a few words why Mao Zedong made me his bodyguard. But amongst all the factors leading up to his choice, the fact that I had never wanted the job was perhaps the most significant of them all. The more unattainable a thing is, the more tantalizing it seems. Mao, a great man but also a human being, was no exception to this rule. Perhaps it is improper to speak thus of him; but anyway, this is what happened.

Soon after Spring Festival in 1947, during the 1946–49 War of Liberation in China, I joined Zhou Enlai's bodyguard. This was at the time when the war between the Kuomintang and the Communists was approaching its final outcome. An élite army of 230,000 men under the command of General Hu Zongnan, Chiang Kai-shek's favourite disciple, had mounted an offensive on the liberated areas in northern Shaanxi Province. In the face of the enemy's onslaught, the Central Committee of the Communist Party left Yan'an and began to engage in guerilla warfare in that part of the province.

It was around August eighteenth when the several hundred of us in the office of the Central Committee reached the Yellow River. It was the toughest period during the entire war in northern Shaanxi. General Liu Kan had sent as many as seven brigades in hot pursuit of us, following us from Suide to Mizhi, and from there on to Jiaxian County and then the Yellow River.

For several days there had been torrential rains without any letup, drenching us to the bones. The river was swollen, its roar could be heard from miles away. Mao was in a bad mood, not so much because of the grim situation which we were facing, as because of the rumours circulating amongst us that we were going to cross the Yellow River. Mao always meant what he said; he was a man not to be expected to give in easily to opposition, or change his mind. He had said, "We will not cross the Yellow River until we defeat Hu Zongnan." Now, with Hu's

army which was under Chiang Kai-shek's direct control, yet to be put out of action, and with seven brigades of troops hot on our heels, crossing to the other side of the river was out of the question as far as Mao was concerned. Besides, northern Shaanxi was then looked upon as a symbol of strength by the army and the people in their life-and-death struggle with the Kuomintang; they would fight on, come hell or high water, so long as "Chairman Mao remained in northern Shaanxi."

Zhou Enlai diplomatically pointed out to Mao that the section of river in front of us was not the Yellow River, but was called the Jialu, and thus we would be crossing the latter, and not the former. But that did not make Mao feel any better, for where we were the Jialu empties into the Yellow River, and that section is called "The Yellow River Fork" by the local people.

Finally a decision was made to cross the Jialu, the only alternative left to us under the circumstances. The enemy had occupied the hills behind us, and their bullets were cutting through the air above our heads and driving into the mud at our feet. We had only three companies to block the enemy's advance and they were quite a distance from us. There was only one guard company protecting those of us in the Central Committee office, and Mao had only one platoon of bodyguards, with Yan Changlin as the platoon leader. In the event of a charge by the enemy, there would only be a little over a hundred of us against several tens of thousands of them.

Ren Bishi, then secretary of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, was in charge of taking us across the river. But negotiating that river was no easy thing. The swollen river surged along with deafening roar, its towering waves threatening to submerge the whole world. The goat-skin rafts were capsized the moment they were lowered into the river and, tossed like leaves, disappeared in the angry rapids.

Caught between a formidable river and several tens of thousands of pursuing troops, I, for all my experience as a seasoned soldier, could not help feeling a little scared.

Mao looked grim, but retained his composure. He lifted two fingers, and pressing them lightly against each other, said, "Give me a cigarette!"

It wasn't said loudly, but it reverberated like thunder over those of us accompanying him on the march.

"Get him a cigarette, quick! Comrade Desheng wants a smoke!"

"Comrade Desheng wants a smoke!"

"A smoke!" "A smoke!" "A smoke!"

Li Desheng was Mao's assumed name when he fought in northern Shaanxi. He had stopped smoking for some time on account of poor health, so his bodyguards were not carrying any cigarettes. And with all of us drenched to the skin by the successive downpours, who would have dreamt of being asked for cigarettes?

Mao sat down on a rock, still holding his fingers up. Finding that he had been kept waiting for too long, he flared up, roaring, "Where's my cigarette?"

Comrade Desheng was angry. Immediately everyone of us began to search our pockets for cigarettes. Then those down the column were heard talking excitedly, as Mao's horse-keeper walked up followed by a noisy crowd, beaming happily. What a welcome sight! The horse-keeper was carrying matches and cigarettes wrapped in a piece of yellow oilcloth.

Immediately the guards, as instructed by Zhou Enlai, spread a light cotton-padded quilt over Mao.

Still deep in thought, Mao lit his cigarette. He took long puffs at it, watching it burn. Then he held his breath, and we all followed suit, gazing at the blue smoke rising from the cigarette. Loud gun reports could be heard, but Mao seemed totally oblivious of them. A deep furrow formed between his eyebrows. Then puffs of smoke began to escape from his nostrils and between his teeth, but before they were completely exhaled, they were drawn back forcibly with a loud hiss.

In what seemed like a fraction of a second, or an eternity, the cigarette burned down to a mere stub. All of a sudden Mao rose from the rock, and throwing away what remained of the cigarette with a vengeance, declared in an earth-shaking voice, "We are not going to cross the Yellow River!"

Mao resumed his walk along the river fork, his steps steady, unhurried. His bodyguard ran up to him, but Mao dismissed him in irritation. Alone, he walked in the front, facing a thicket of enemy guns, followed by several hundred of us. In a confrontation like this, a single shot from the enemy troops, to say nothing of a hail of bullets, would have been enough to change the course of history. But miraculously, all the enemy guns fell silent as Mao walked past them for a few hundred

metres, until he disappeared beyond a mound....

“Bang!”

It sounded like a gun going off accidentally or a salute to Mao Zedong. And then, as if startled from sleep, the enemy troops opened fire, filling the air with their din.

This dramatic confrontation with the enemy troops was to be repeated three or four times during the war in northern Shaanxi.

Ignoring the guns' reports, Mao sat down to take a break and sang a few lines from a Beijing opera aria.

After the break Mao walked up a hill. Half way up he stopped in a village that had seventy or eighty households in it. It was a small hill with scarcely any trees or water. There was a temple there called the White Dragon Temple, apparently for the convenience of praying for rain. As Mao's visit to the village was accompanied by a downpour, the villagers took him as the incarnation of the dragon. Down the hill Liu Kan's troops bivouacked, the bonfires they built stretching as far as the eye could see. That night Mao slept on the hill; he snored loudly whilst the rain poured down.

The next day, August 19, Ye Zilong and Wang Dongxing summoned me. Ye was then chief staff officer of the Central Committee detachment and Wang, his assistant. We met in front of a cave-house* in the village.

“A transfer of work for you,” Ye was always to the point when he talked. “We want you to be Chairman Mao's bodyguard. You've been a bodyguard all these years and are experienced.”

“The transfer means we trust you. We thought it over for a long time before we reached the decision, ” said Wang, and stressing the political importance of their decision, he added, “It's an honourable job and important. You mustn't disappoint us.”

I bent my head, reluctant to tell them what I thought of their decision. Only the day before, Mao, in a fit of anger, had dismissed Yan Yongsheng, his former bodyguard. Since I first joined the army at the age of eleven, about ten years ago, I had been first an orderly, then a guard and now a bodyguard, so their decision did not surprise me. But those who had been in the army as long as I had were now officers, with

*Such houses, carved out of the hill-sides (or cliffs) are a common sight in northern Shaanxi Province.

the rank of lieutenant or colonel.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Ye. It was just a routine question, but I found myself blurting out, "No, I don't want to be his bodyguard. I've been a bodyguard for too long."

Since they had not anticipated such a response, they looked a bit surprised and ill at ease. Realizing that I had gone too far in my refusal, I backed down. "Of course," I said, "I'll go along if this is a decision by the Party...."

"Glad to hear you say that," said Ye, looking relieved. "I believe you'll prove your worth with the new assignment."

"You may begin today," said Wang, knitting his brows. "It's only a temporary arrangement until we make a final decision on this matter."

That's how I was brought to the side of Mao Zedong.

One day on the march Mao didn't say a word to me throughout the whole day; he didn't even look at me, although I was walking between him and Zhou Enlai. I became suspicious. "Ye and Wang must have reported that conversation to the chairman," I said to myself, "and the chairman must have got angry with me when he heard it. They might have saved their breath since they didn't know what was on my mind."

We were driven almost stumbling down the hill by the rain. The river had risen at the foot of the hill, and the soldiers who could swim were throwing a bridge over it under the direction of Wang Dongxing. The pursuing troops had by now reached the top of the hill and the loud reports of their guns were causing us to begin to panic.

"It looks like it'll be some time before they can finish," Mao said to Staff Officer Liu, after looking at where the men were putting up the bridge. "Set up the radio transmitter."

The moment the transmitter was ready for work, calm was miraculously restored amongst us, and the anxiety that had gripped us earlier vanished. Sitting underneath an army cotton-padded quilt which we held over him, Mao read the telegrams from the war zones and wrote his instructions in pencil, which he handed to Liu to be transmitted to the headquarters of the various field armies.

Droning, a few enemy airplanes appeared and began to circle above us. We asked Mao to take cover at the foot of the hill, but Mao, without taking his eyes off the telegrams he was reading, and pointing with his pencil towards the hilltop concealed behind the clouds, said, "Do they