



The Life of Madame Mao

Ross Terrill

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A peculiar facet of China's history is that its greatest villains have often been women. The evil Empress Wu lives on in legend, as does another ogre: the "White-Boned Demon," Madame Mao Zedong. On January 25, 1981, Jiang Qing, widow of Mao, was sentenced to death. Two years later, that sentence was changed to life imprisonment.

The daughter of a concubine, Jiang Qing grew up as an outcast in the homes of wealthy men. In her early teens, she joined a troupe of roving actors. By the age of nineteen, she had exhausted two marriages. Reaching Shanghai, she won theatrical success as Ibsen's Nora - a role that gave expression to both her rage and ambition. At twenty-four, Jiang Qing abandoned stardom at the height of a movie career to join Mao Zedong after his Long March across China. She married the great revolutionary, after his current wife was ousted, and rose to be the inspiring and vengeful leader of the Cultural Revolution. As Mao sank toward death, Jiang Qing made her bid to be empress. She failed, and soldiers came to arrest her in the middle of the night. Her downfall reverberated across the world.

Ross Terrill, author of *The Life of Mao*, one of the West's most eminent Sinologists, is uniquely qualified to unearth Madame Mao's hidden story. Terrill went to China and Taiwan to track down documents and living sources and discovered secret papers and photos that had escaped Madame Mao's confiscation.

In the author's words, "This book tells Jiang Qing's story through the eloquent, unofficial voices of China: oral histories, eyewitness accounts from the grassroots, testimony of those Chinese who watched, knew, hated, or loved Jiang Qing. . . ."

The result is a portrait of a woman, vivid, flawed, and human, who fought her way to a place in history, as well as a riveting view of one of the most momentous revolutions of all time.

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