

Today's Martyrs – Lin Zhao



There are no documents that prove the tyrant came to visit the 'little girl', nothing available, but she told her mother and sister about it during a brief medical parole. In their great fear they demanded she say no more of it. Why did he come? Poetry? He loved poetry, and likely knew of her talent, of *A Day in Prometheus' Passion*, or of *Seagull* with its theme of resurrection. Desire? He had 200 concubines, and even desired his son's wife to the point he did not tell her of her husband's death in one of his wars until a year had passed, so perhaps. Curiosity? Perhaps he wondered why the 'little girl' who had helped kill his enemies was now his enemy? But perhaps he came just to gloat. He now held sway over almost a fourth of humanity, had defeated his domestic foes and stymied the Americans in Korea, and killed up to 50 million of his own people in the largest famine in history while promoting an autarchy that diverted rice to make alcohol fuel for his nuclear missiles. He told her "I refuse to believe I can't subdue you stupid little girl!"

Lin Zhao would have bristled at the label 'little girl' although she was young and slight of build. Born Peng Lingzhao, she took the *nom de plume* Lin Zhao for her writings. At the time of her first arrest she had been a dedicated Communist for almost ten years. As an idealistic teen she had written propaganda for the land reform teams that killed 2 million 'Rightists', actions that she witnessed and supported. She began to doubt her leaders only in 1957 after her friends were arrested in a purge – some just to make the tyrant's arrest quotas - and were sent to the countryside during the great famine, some never to return. She herself was punished as a Rightist but remained in the city due to her frail health. She had been baptized at her Methodist secondary school shortly before her conversion to Communism, and she returned to her faith in the three years prior to her 1960 jailing.

At her arraignment she was so outspoken against Communist injustice that the judge questioned her sanity. Once jailed she was continually beaten and tortured, and when denied ink she decided to follow an ancient Chinese tradition by writing in her own blood, eventually losing all feeling in her fingers. Her knowledge of Christianity must have been limited to her brief exposures at school and an occasional worship service; consequently her writings began not as carefully measured Christian thoughts but as flaming denunciations of the evils she saw. In later years she called for God's wrath to be poured from the sky, even if she was consumed. However, she was aware of the command of Jesus to love one's enemies, and so she wrote of her persecutors:

"As a Christian...I have come to see more clearly and deeply the many terrifying and shocking evils committed by your demonic political party! I grieved and wept for them!...Yet even when I touched the darkest, the most terrifying, the bloodiest, and the most savage center of your power - the core of evil - I still glimpsed, I did not completely overlook, the occasional spark of humanity in you...Then I cried in even greater anguish! I cried for your blood-smearred souls, which are unable to rid themselves of evil and are dragged by its terrifying weight ever deeper into the swamp of death...as I write this, hot tears are rushing into my eyes."

Lin Zhao's writings showed signs of mental disarray as the beatings and tortures continued. She would cry out in her written prayers "No, No! God will not let me go insane. As long as I live, he will certainly keep my senses, as he knows my memory!", and they would then resume their lucidity. It is possible she imagined the tyrant's visit, but she accurately

prophesized the tyrant's unleashing of the Cultural Revolution that would kill another 2 million. Once she heard a voice say "Rise, my child, and go fight the battle for me". Though not Catholic, she wrote a letter to the Vatican pleading that "holy and righteous churches" come to view the hundreds of thousands of Chinese suicides [including her father's, just days after her arrest] as lesser evils than those of their persecutors, and to have Masses said for their souls. In her last letter to her mother she wrote in contrition that while she had no blood on her hands she was "splashed with some blood". These letters of course went straight to her file.

In May 1966 Lin Zhao told a friend she expected to be executed; the order was secretly given in late 1967, but knowledge of it was kept from her until the date of execution. Her jailers tired of her shouted witness of the regime's crimes to the other inmates and to the public who passed the prison, so in her last months they moved her to an emptied floor and fitted her with a rubber mask to muffle her voice. On April 29, 1968, Red Guards stormed the prison hospital, pulled her IV line, and dragged her out as her doctor hid trembling in his office. She was gagged and forced to stand wearing her hospital gown in the prison auditorium while the revolutionaries screamed their hatred. She was then dragged behind the auditorium and shot dead. Lin Zhao was 35. A policeman appeared at her mother's home and demanded payment for the bullet.

In 1981 Lin Zhao was 'rehabilitated', and by a miracle, perhaps thanks to official admirers of her poetry, her prison writings were released in 1984 to her sister. Thousands, perhaps millions, of Chinese have read them since their publication in 2013.

There are no documents that prove the tyrant personally ordered the death of the 'little girl' who he could not subdue, nothing available, but it is known he issued this 'supreme instruction' regarding the believers he made into martyrs: "There certainly will be those who refuse to change till they die. They are willing to go see God carrying their granite heads on their shoulders. That will be of little consequence".

How wrong he was, as he was in all else besides worldly reward and power. In heaven and on earth, Lin Zhao's life is one of great consequence thanks to the faith and honesty and tenacity that she carried within. The tyrant's heirs and successors know this well: today her gravesite hosts a video surveillance camera to record the many who visit to honor her.

Today's Martyrs

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