

Five: Fatuous And Cruel

7:“The Clown”



Jiang Zemin is nicknamed the clown. He took drama classes when he was young. His infamous habit of combing his hair in front of everybody was passed on from his show-biz teacher back then. Jiang’s passion for showboating had often reached alarming highs. He might recite poems, sing songs, or showcase his English without consideration of the occasion.



First, his hair-combing. Jiang visited Spain in 1996, in front of King

Carlos, he took out a comb and proceeded to groom himself. The next day, the largest newspaper in Spain, as well as many other newspapers, run a front page photo, and a story about the incident, the caption of which was: "King Carlos Watching Jiang Zemin Combing His Hair!" Soon after, newspapers around the world run the photo. Many Chinese who were living overseas felt a collective loss of face, upon catching the wind of the article.



More than once had Jiang combed his hair in front of the television cameras. When in March of 1993, the National People's Congress was held in Beijing, Jiang, who sat at the center stage, took out his comb, and began combing his hair with such focus, that the outside world had receded from his mind. On October 24th, 1995, Jiang was giving a speech at the United Nations, faced with cameramen and reporters from around the world, Jiang, once again, took out from his pocket his comb, and proceeded to groom himself. This had become the classics of laughing stock of the world press, at the expense of China's dignity.



Jiang loved to sing in public. In 1996 Jiang visited the Philippines. On the trip, he voluntarily proposed to stop the disputing jurisdiction over the Nan Sha Islands, and to develop an economy shared with the Philippines.

That same night, the President of the Philippine invited Jiang to a banquet. Jiang was still thinking of the charming senator, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo though, whom he just met.

At the banquet, Jiang still very much lost in his daydream, to others surprise, grabbed the microphone, and launched into a rendition of Elvis' "Love Me Tender".



On Feb. 21, 2002, Jiang welcomed President George W Bush from the United States at the Great Hall Of The People.

He sang "O Sole Mio" in front of more than one hundred guests. President Bush clapped in response, and half-jokingly asked US Secretary Of State

Collin Powell to sing a serenade.
Powell smiled and politely declined.



During a visit to Iceland, while everyone present was busy eating at a banquet, Jiang stood up unexpectedly, and broke into a song, leaving guests and host at loss for what to do.

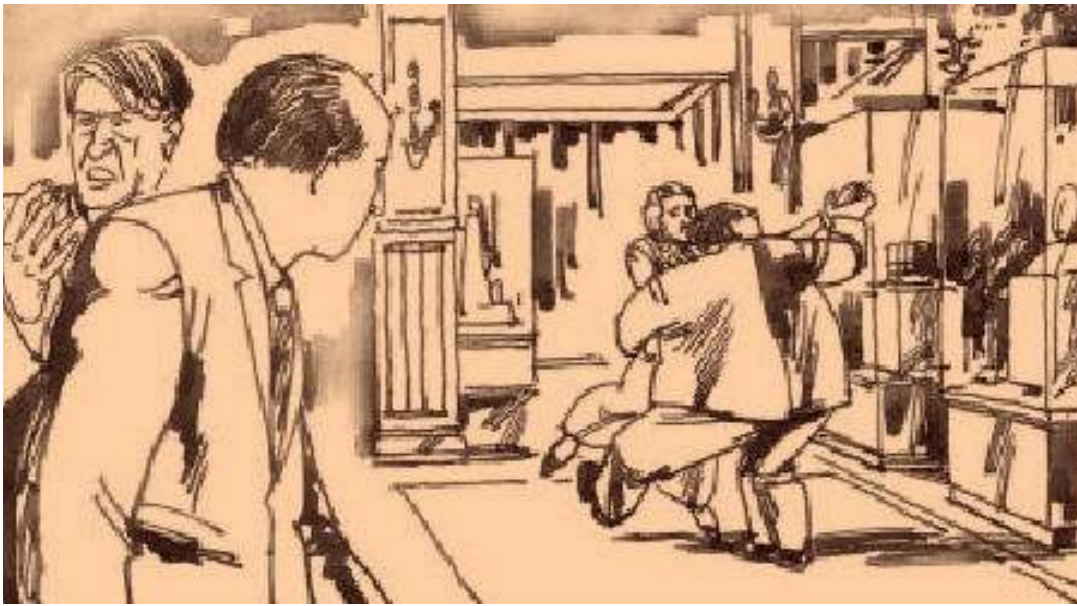
Jiang's wife Wang Yeping appeared very much embarrassed.

The scene was afterward detailed completely with a large color photo by the largest Iceland daily newspaper.



Jiang loved to dance, too.

At the dinner party at the Great Hall of The People, Jiang grabbed US First Lady Laura Bush for a dance. Then, not satisfied, Jiang grabbed the US National Security Adviser Rise, and the wife of the US Ambassador to China Sarah Randt for yet another dance.



On October 24, 1999, Jiang was visiting a museum in France. Out of sudden excitement, Jiang grabbed the hand of First Lady Bernadette Chirac, and started dancing the Waltz, as a surprised Jacques Chirac looked on. Just as the alarm began to set in for the President, Jiang again grabbed Bernadette's hand, and laughed loud ostentatiously. President Chirac was upset by the showing, thinking Jiang was embarrassing himself. French people fumed over the incident, feeling it had been insulting.



Jiang Zemin was totally lacking diplomatic etiquette. On April 19, 2000, the President of Turkey was prepared to give Jiang a national medal during his visit to Turkey. It's common courtesy that on such occasions the host country's president would himself place the medal on its recipient. To everyone's surprise,

however, an eager Jiang jumped to the fore, and physically bestowed the medal upon himself, much to the shock of onlookers.



When in 1999 Jiang stopped by Great Britain, en route to France, he declared in English: "The air here is very good. There is natural gas everywhere." Perhaps he meant to say that the air was fresh, which of course has nothing to do with natural gas. The following day, the quote was carried in the Chinese language newspapers, quickly making Jiang the butt of jokes.



Jokes about Jiang's sloppy English dated back to his days as Mayor of Shanghai. On one occasion, as Mayor, Jiang accompanied foreign visitors to a public park. Jiang wanted to show his guests that Shanghai had become open, and that young people dared to openly date in the park. He

pointed at a young couple, and declared: “Making love!” much to his guests’ discomfort.



Jiang Zemin likes showing off by reciting verses.

At meeting with overseas Chinese he would quite often recite a few lines of poetry to show off his literary capability.

Once a Chinese person asked Jiang whether he would retire. Jiang replied by reciting a verse from a Song Dynasty poem that goes: “I’d rather return with the west wind.” The answers, if it could be called that, were all shows and no substance.



In the year 2000, Jiang met with overseas Chinese at a New York City hotel, when a Chinese man asked about plans to develop China’s west region, Jiang responded by reciting two verses from a Tang Dynasty poem,

which goes: “Drink up one more cup please, as beyond the Yang Guan Garrison Gate friends would be none.”



While visiting the United States, Jiang, on one occasion, recited a passage from Lincoln’s speech to President Clinton for no apparent reason.

When a head of a nation visiting a foreign country, there are certain diplomatic protocols, and etiquette. A lack of etiquette doesn’t reflect merely on the individual involved, but also on his or her nation. As the head of the Chinese nation, Jiang’s exaggerated acts, and disregard of diplomatic protocols reflected poorly on not only himself, but also on the image of China and its people.