

Party (the interview with Wang Rong in the hospital shortly before his death, asking for financial compensation as a form of official redress, is particularly moving). This question is central in the current wave of independent Chinese documentaries, with directors like Hu Jie turning to commemorating the victims of the Cultural Revolution (*Though I am Gone*, 2006). The protagonist of Wang Bing's documentary *He Fengming* (2007), a three-hour interview of a victim of the anti-Rightist movement, displays the same yearning for recognition of her revolutionary credentials by the very state that has persecuted her. S. Louisa Wei, Peng Xiaolian's co-director, underlines how, from an initial rejection of politics, she evolved towards embracing the idea of writing stories "on the margin of official history" (p. 46) to document the "spirit of independent thinking" (p. 36) of some of the intellectuals she had met.

Therefore, in addition to the unique historical material it presents in a visually compelling way, the film also invites its audience to a much-needed reflection on Chinese intellectuals' complex relationship with the state: for this reason alone it merits wide discussion in academia and public forums, both in the West and in China, where, through semi-official channels, it will hopefully find its way to the audience that is most closely concerned by it.

SEBASTIAN VEG

On the Cultural Revolution in Tibet: The Nyemo Incident of 1969

MELVYN C. GOLDSTEIN, BEN JIAO and TANZEN LHUNDRUP

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009

xvi + 236 pp. \$24.95

ISBN 978-0-520-25682-8 doi:10.1017/S0305741009000605

One of the more obscure traditions faithfully upheld by successive *CQ* editors has been to mark the passing of every quarter century of the journal's existence by inviting a Swede to write a review of a book on modern Tibet. In 1985, the book was *Tibetan Journey* by Christer Leopold (a professional friend of China who had "for more than ten years carried out research on Tibet") and the reviewer my former colleague Lars Ragvald. Ragvald, who had lived in China during the first years of the Cultural Revolution, was palpably frustrated by *Tibetan Journey* and referred to it as a "surprisingly naïve and weak book" (*The China Quarterly* No. 101, p. 168). As a positive sign, perhaps, of how much has changed in the interregnum, and not merely in the academic literature on Tibet, it is my unqualified pleasure this time around to review *On the Cultural Revolution in Tibet: The Nyemo Incident of 1969* and to pronounce it an admirably sophisticated and powerful analysis of events of baffling complexity.

The Nyemo incident – or, in the words of an official 1995 CCP chronology, "counter-revolutionary rebellion" – occurred in Nyemo county, southwest of Lhasa, in the summer of 1969. It involved a mob of hundreds of villagers who went on a rampage, led by a young nun claiming to be possessed by a warrior deity. The most fanatical of the nun's followers attacked, brutally mutilated and killed county officials and ordinary villagers as well as members of a locally stationed People's Liberation Army unit. A central thesis advanced by Goldstein, Jiao and Lhundrup is that the Cultural Revolution had created a "climate" (p. 162) in which this tragedy could unfold, and hence their own remarkable designation of the attackers as "Buddhist Red Guards" (p. 101). Whatever they deserve to be called, the killers were certainly not your ordinary Beijing middle-school students armed with belt buckles and Mao's *Quotations*, as an interview with a survivor excerpted

in the book illustrates: “Q: Did he cut [your mother’s] hand off with a knife? A: They used long swords. I didn’t see it clearly because it was dark. They struck her with a sword twice and then buried her hand in front of her. I took some tea, melted butter, and a shirt made from raw silk to stop the bleeding...” (p. 116).

This book is a major addition to the literature on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – that much is certain. Even expert readers will find a wealth of new information, illuminating commentary, and thought-provoking insight between its covers. It also engages with a debate in Tibetan studies circles about the precise nature of the Nyemo “incident.” Some scholars have sought to characterize it as a case of Tibetan nationalist resistance against China and as a battle for “ethnic” independence, while others argue that it was driven mainly by socio-economic factors (pp. 4–7). Goldstein, Jiao and Lhundrup take issue with both of these characterizations which they assert have “inadvertently distorted the historical reality” (p. 170). Their own understanding is that it was multifaceted and fuelled by “the anger that rural Tibetans felt at the direction [CCP] party politics had taken, not only in the realms of taxation, but also toward religion and culture” (pp. 170–71). Based on my own superficial research into Cultural Revolutionary turmoil in ethnic minority areas in neighbouring Yunnan province in 1969 (*Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, No. 19, 2004, pp. 27–54), this comes across as a very convincing claim. Local people on China’s frontiers were indeed “pawns in the larger political struggles created by Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution,” but they were also, and no less so, political actors in their own right, fighting “to empower new officials and make major changes in local rules regarding taxes, communes, economics, and religion” (pp. 170–71).

On the Cultural Revolution in Tibet is based on extensive and in some cases unique documentary sources in Tibetan and Chinese, and on taped interviews conducted in Tibet with 75 Nyemo inhabitants who were adults in 1969. It is a collaborative work, of the kind that would have been unthinkable not so long ago, involving foreign, Tibetan and Han scholars. It comes with a useful glossary of correct Tibetan spellings and a set of appendixes consisting of translated key documents (why one of them is a translation from Tibetan into *pinyin* and not into Chinese or English is still a mystery to me...). For students and teachers of history who want to remind themselves of just how much more there was to the Cultural Revolution than red guards, little red books, revolutionary model operas, and the “Gang of Four,” it is *the* book to read.

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Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China

STEPHEN R. MACKINNON

Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2008

xiv + 182 pp. \$39.95; £28.95

ISBN 978-520-25445-9 doi:10.1017/S0305741009000617

For those studying the history of wartime China (1937–45), this was a highly anticipated book. It is difficult to imagine a more fascinating and overlooked chapter of the war, particularly because histories of the Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang or KMT) efforts in resisting Japanese invasion are still too few in number. The Japanese attack on Wuhan had the highest combined casualty rates of any single battle during the war, and it was the closest China’s factions came to achieving a truly “united front” against the enemy. It was a space where writers of every ideological inclination