

Reviews and Commentaries

Jiyi (记忆, *Remembrance*)

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As of 2008, historians of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution have yet another reason to remember 13 September as a date of some significance. Their first reason, of course, has long been that on this day in 1971, Mao Zedong's designated successor Lin Biao "went to see Karl Marx," departing this world from the burning wreckage of a Hawker Siddeley Trident on the Mongolian steppe. A second reason surely ought to be to remember the greatest of the first generation of Chinese Cultural Revolution historians, Professor Wang Nianyi, who passed away on this day in 2007. Finally, they may now celebrate the publication, on 13 September 2008, of the inaugural issue of the first journal dedicated exclusively to academic research on the Cultural Revolution. By the end of 2008, nine issues of it had appeared, each close to 70 pages in length.

Remembrance is an electronic journal edited by Cultural Revolution historians in China in the May 4th tradition of the joint intellectual venture that does not so much put a premium on uniformity of opinion – and even less on common party political affiliation – as on a shared desire to explore a subject without prejudice in the pursuit of historical truth. Some of those who publish on its pages write from personal experience of life at the very apex of Mao Zedong's political system: they include, for example, retired assistants and former political secretaries of members of the ninth CCP Central Committee Politburo. Other writers contribute on the basis of lesser involvement or their own historical research and archival studies. The publishers themselves belong to the cream of the crop of China's contemporary historians, including some of the same individuals who, in 2006, organized the first Chinese non-governmental Symposium on the Cultural Revolution (for a review of the minutes of that symposium, see *The China Quarterly*, No. 190, June 2007, pp. 492–93). Here and there in the table of contents, the names of contributors to *Remembrance* based in Europe and North America also appear. The journal is a Chinese venture, but in the 21st century that no longer prevents it from being a globalized one.

The mission statement in issue No. 1 deplored the fact that while the Cultural Revolution had occurred in China, "the fruits of the research conducted on it are to be found abroad." In view of this, the publishers have set themselves the task of "making an effort, no matter how small, toward changing this state of affairs. Our aim is to gather the fruits of research, serve as an academic resource, establish a forum for exchange, and promote Cultural Revolution research." Judging by the contents of the first nine issues, the publishers have already been quite successful in doing most of these things. Much has been written about the internet revolution and its impact – actual and potential – on how research is conducted and communicated in the PRC. Obviously, without access to the empowering resources of paperless publication and instant multiple recipient distribution across the web, *Remembrance* would possibly not have seen the light of day. How does it jump the Great Firewall, sceptical *CQ* readers might then ask? Metaphorically speaking, this reviewer's guess is that it does not: it is a tiny mouse that darts through cracks in the wall's foundation, noticed but left alone by the cybercensor's black and white felines.

Remembrance is a no-frills low-cost carrier of first class research: it is, one could say, all substance and no appearance. As of issue No. 9, there are hyperlinks from the table of contents to the actual articles in MS Word format, but that is about as high-tech as it gets. Every issue contains a few longer research articles: in No. 9, these deal with the theft of arms and Mao Zedong's policy of "arming the left." One is written by a former Central Cultural Revolution Group staffer, another by an ex-Red Guard turned professional historian. Transcriptions of a couple of rare primary source texts, plus a personal recollection of what taking part in the "theft" was about, round off the probe into this particularly difficult subject (compare *The China Quarterly*, No. 182, June 2005, pp. 277–300).

In an effort to stimulate debate on research methodology, narrative conventions, and source selection bias, the publishers of *Remembrance* called early on for in-depth analyses and critiques of particularly influential texts on the Cultural Revolution. The first such text on which readers were invited to engage in a "conversation in writing" was volume eight – covering the years 1972–1976 – of the large ten-volume *History of the People's Republic of China* published by the Chinese University Press in Hong Kong in 2008. Written by Shi Yun and Li Danhui, two PRC historians with impeccable research credentials, the book is given a very positive rating by Tang Shaojie from Qinghua University. Tang says it made him "all the more convinced that in their reassessments and research on the Cultural Revolution, scholars from mainland China have on the whole already moved a considerable distance away from, or even altogether 'parted company' with, 'imperially mandated' forms of exposition and argumentation in as far as the history of the Cultural Revolution is concerned" (*Remembrance* No. 9, p. 3). A pseudonymous historian based outside China approaches Shi's and Li's work rather differently, dissecting segments of it literally sentence by sentence, casting doubt on the appropriateness of an adjective here, an adverb there, on the ascription of motives X and Y to Zhou Enlai's actions as presented on page *n*, and on the overall slanting of the story as far as the importance of A, B and C is concerned (*Remembrance* No. 8, pp. 2–10; No. 9, pp. 5–18). Next in line for the same enhanced intellectual interrogation process, the publishers of *Remembrance* have announced, will be the Chinese-language edition of *Mao's Last Revolution* by Roderick MacFarquhar and myself, due to appear on Taiwan in 2009.

As they explain in their mission statement, the publishers want *Remembrance* to be able to "serve as an academic resource." Toward this end, they provide in each issue "raw data" of likely interest to historians. Running in five instalments beginning in No. 3 is the text (with copious explanatory annotation) of an original diary from Chongqing in which the bloody battles that shook that city between June and October 1967 are chronicled. The membership of some of China's first provincial-level Revolutionary Committees is presented in the Documentation section, providing readers not just with names but also with members' age, sex, ethnicity, position, work unit and more. In a special section called The Old Paper Pile, *Remembrance* regularly publishes salvaged "scraps" of social history documentation, such as a July 1976 big-character poster from Fudan University denouncing a foreign student, the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee's internal 1967 month-by-month and subject-by-subject statistics on popular petitions, and a curious document on Cultural Revolutionary callisthenics. (For a European historian's recent study of this esoteric subject, see Daniel Leese's chapter in Klöpsch, Lämmer and Tokarski, eds., *Sport in China: Beiträge aus interdisziplinärer Sicht*. Köln: Sportverlag Strauß, 2008, pp. 65–88.) On the lighter side, *Remembrance* in November 2008 reprinted for the first time in over 40 years the famous time traveller transcript – long believed lost – of a

conversation between the literary giant Lu Xun (1881–1936) and Red Guards from Beijing's No. 2 Language Institute on how to revolutionize education.

Ambitious academic projects similar to *Remembrance* have come and gone before. The trans-national *CCP Research Newsletter* – a minor serials and network venture launched outside China prior to the internet age, in 1988 – folded quietly after 11 issues. One would very much like to hope that *Remembrance* will live longer, and for now that appears entirely possible. Four and a half decades ago, the CCP declared that Leninism could survive only on the condition that revisionism, its negation, was given an equally long lease on life. Surely that supreme instruction must mean that a harmonious society, too, can only remain a reality for as long as the remembrance of *its* negation (was that not what the Cultural Revolution ultimately was?) is not made to fade.

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It is a measure of the importance of China's health system and public health that *The Lancet* has dedicated a series of papers to it. And the introductory "Comment" to the series sets out the importance of China for global health: China accounts for one fifth of the world's population; it is a major source of health innovation; it is "a major contributor in the control and spread of global health risks" as its participation in trade grows; and its health system is now extending globally, notably through its influence in the World Health Organization (WHO) and in sending health teams to Africa.

The series consists of seven main papers on "Health system reform in China," and 12 short "Comment" pieces. Together these provide readers with an up-to-date and wide-ranging picture of China's most important public health problems and a sense of the key issues facing the health system. The papers draw – though not necessarily very systematically – on some of the latest data and research. The Comments provide brief but illuminating summaries on important related issues, including biomedical science and technology, the current role of traditional Chinese medicine, reproductive health, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, schistosomiasis control, barefoot doctors; medical research ethics, government policy and organ transplantation, and internal migration and health. There is a fascinating brief anthropological account of why smoking is so prevalent among Chinese men and rare among women.

Three of the main papers examine China's most important public health problems, and the four others discuss aspects of its health care system's finance and delivery. The papers on public health (that is, the health of the Chinese population) focus on the big issues to give an overview of key trends in infectious diseases, chronic non-communicable diseases, and in injury-related fatalities. They then assess the implications of these trends for the health system. Wang and colleagues argue that many infectious diseases are in decline, though there are new challenges from HIV/AIDS, SARS and avian flu. Of particular concern for the future are infections – like SARS and avian flu – that are transmitted from animals. The risk that such infectious diseases will continue to emerge is high because China's growing wealth has resulted in rising meat consumption and therefore a rapid increase in the number of animals raised to provide food.

At the same time, China is seeing the same kind of increase in non-communicable diseases that wealthier countries have experienced. Yang and colleagues argue that