

Review Essay

Rewriting the Cultural Revolution: From Centre to Periphery

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Chen Boda zuihou koushu huiyi (Chen Boda's Last Oral Recollections) (Revised Edition). By CHEN XIAONONG. [Hong Kong: Sun Global Publishing, 2005. 445 pp. HK\$120.00. ISBN 988-98295-1-7.]

Xizang jiyi (Memories of Tibet). By WEISE. [Taipei: Locus, 2006. 424 pp. N380.00. ISBN 986-7291-85-9.]

Although 2006 marked the 40th anniversary of the launching of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, understanding of this traumatic event in mainland China is still largely limited within the parameters established by the 1981 *Resolution on CPC History*.¹ Yet as even those who were teenagers at the time move into old age, oral history is being used to explore some of the most sensitive issues. This is shown by the appearance of two books written by mainland authors and published in Hong Kong and Taiwan. *Chen Boda's Last Oral Recollections* is an attempt by Chen Boda's son, Chen Xiaonong, to rehabilitate his father's reputation after he was condemned in 1980 by the reformist leadership as a counter-revolutionary for his part in the Cultural Revolution. In the process it provides new versions of the key events that took place at the centre of power. *Memories of Tibet*, by the leading Tibetan literary figure, Weise, (Woese, born 1966), gives a view far removed from Beijing by bringing together interviews with 23 grass-roots activists from various ethnic groups and setting these in the context of the debate over how much responsibility the indigenous population of Tibet should bear for the destruction wrought on its heritage. While these works take entirely different perspectives, they pose similar questions about issues of motivation and responsibility and show how the impact of the Cultural Revolution is being reassessed in the context of China's rapid social change today.

Casting Blame at the Centre

Chen Boda's Last Oral Recollections will be of interest to historians of any period of the CCP's rise to power, not just the Cultural Revolution. Yet its most direct challenge to the official version of history can be found in its critique of the way that the charges against Chen have swung from his portrayal as a key radical when he was

1. *Resolution on CPC History (1949–81)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981).

head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG) during the early years of the upheaval, through his vilification as a traitor and revisionist “black hand” after he fell out with Mao Zedong in 1970, to his final condemnation as a counter-revolutionary in 1980.

The main strategy that is used to clear Chen’s name of the first of these charges involves shifting the blame for the work of the CCRG on to Jiang Qing, claiming that she took over the leading role when his health began to decline in July 1966. After that he was largely confined to making efforts to moderate Jiang’s actions. Even when he makes a rare admission of guilt by accepting that it was a “serious mistake” to take part in the criticism of Tao Chu, this is put down to the after effects of sleeping pills that allowed Jiang to manipulate him. Given that Jiang and the Gang of Four have been blamed for many of the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution, and that standard PRC works on the subject acknowledge that they had a bad relationship with Chen, such a view in itself is compatible with the orthodox CCP version of history.

The same cannot be said for the way in which the book challenges the vilification of Chen as a supporter of Lin Biao after the split with Mao in 1970. PRC accounts attribute this to Chen’s taking part in a conspiracy to pave the way for Lin’s climb to power by installing Mao as a National Chairman and advocating a Marxist theory of genius at the Second Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee, and this has been repeated in some recent English works too.² According to the account in *Chen Boda’s Last Recollections*, however, the proposal to install Mao as National Chairman was formulated not by Chen but by Wang Dongxing with the support of Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng who were responding to a widespread demand for the need to have a proper head of state. Chen claims that even Mao personally told him in a private meeting that he was not opposed to the idea of creating the post if someone else could be found to fill it. Chen, however, did not even mention the issue in his speech to the plenum.

In the end, Mao seized on Chen’s view that there can be place in Marxism for a theory of genius as a pretext to attack him. Chen argues that this onslaught and his consequent fall from power, however, was not due to any alliance with Lin Biao. Instead, it was his long-standing insistence that raising production was more important than political activism and Mao’s lingering bitterness over his support for Peng Dehuai at Lushan in 1959 that allowed his enemies to turn

2. Xi Quan and Jin Chunming, “*Wenhua dageming*” *jian shi* (*Short History of the “Cultural Revolution”*) (Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1996), pp. 227–38; Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, *Wenhua da geming shi nian shi* (Vol. 1) (Taipei: Baiquan shuju, 1989), pp. 363–66, English edition: Yen Chia-chi (Yan Jiaqi) and Kao Kao (Gao Gao), *The Ten Year History of the Cultural Revolution* (Taipei: Institute of Contemporary China Studies, 1988), pp. 309–311; Jung Chang and Jon Holiday, *Mao the Unknown Story* (London: Vintage, 2006), p. 575; Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press), pp. 300–301.

Mao against him. Despite Mao's scorn, Chen claims that he remained loyal to the Chairman right to the end, even protesting to his gaolers about the injustice of punishing a man who had saved Mao's life during a KMT air raid. By looking at the way in which CCP documents related to this issue have changed over the years, charges of a Lin-Chen alliance are presented as a post-facto construction, while it is argued that pre-1971 pre-documentation shows that the relationship between the two was not in fact good.

Such attempts to clear Chen's name chip away at the orthodox version of the Cultural Revolution due to the way in which they inevitably point the finger of blame at those power holders who were later exonerated by the narrative that developed under "reform and opening." While Chen expresses great admiration for Zhou Enlai throughout the book, he is thus also deeply implicated by this account of the split that began at the Second Plenum, an interpretation that is also included in the broader deconstruction of the Zhou myth by Gao Wenqian's recent banned biography.³ We are also reminded that it was Zhou Enlai who insisted that Chen become head of the CCRG, very much against his own wishes. Chen pulls no punches when he challenges the tendency to absolve Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping of blame for the excesses of the early years of the movement. Liu comes over as a harsh authoritarian in incidents such as the widespread and violent repression that followed his dispatch of work teams to restore order on campuses. Chen's opposition to this decision is explained as being due to his determination to defend the public against a corrupt Party and his concerns that a return to the repression of the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign was taking place.

The way in which Liu and other members of the Central Committee have been portrayed as trying to modify the 16 May Directive drawn up by Chen and Kang Sheng is also challenged, with an eyewitness account given by Li Xuefeng cited as key evidence that there was no dissent over the document. Moreover, the book points out that it was Zhou, Liu and Deng who deployed the work group to the *People's Daily* that penned the notorious editorial of 31 May 1966 on "Sweeping Out Bull Monsters and Snake Spirits" ("*Hengsao yiqie niugui sheshen*"), which was used as evidence to condemn Chen in 1980. None of these figures complained at the time that the Party's main organ was being used to spread counter-revolutionary propaganda, he points out. Although he does accept that he chose the title from a list suggested by the authors, he argues that it was already a commonly used phrase that Liu Shaoqi himself deployed to label those who criticized the Party from below.

Deng Xiaoping is also implicated in the production of the 31 May editorial, because he is said to have been eager for the Party organ to produce something that would challenge the impression that the

3. Gao Wenqian, *Wan nian Zhou Enlai (Zhou Enlai's Late Years)* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 2003), pp. 288–304.

Jiefangjun bao (PLA News) was determining the ideological agenda. Based on the father flimsy evidence of a citation from a 1986 article in the American Chinese magazine *Zhishifenzi* (*Intellectual*), he is also said to have advocated that the children of worker and peasant cadres should take power in schools. Chen, in contrast, is said to have protested against this “bloodline theory” as being inconsistent with the doctrine of class struggle. As a result he was criticized by the Red Guards, and he does not forget to remind us that they tended to be the children of high-ranking cadres. After Chen intervened to save a group of students from a beating because some of their parents had dubious class backgrounds, even though they had walked from Tianjin to Beijing to see Mao, he even incurred the displeasure of Zhou Enlai who was patron of the offending Red Guard unit.

Perhaps the most remarkable defence of Chen, though, lies in the way that the book aligns him with the liberal leaders in the early years of “reform and opening,” and especially Hu Yaobang. This is partly because he claims that it was Hu who removed his name from the list of those responsible for the errors of the Cultural Revolution in the 1981 *Resolution*. He reveals that the Central Committee under Hu even took the trouble to send a delegation to explain that they were treating his case differently from those of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. In contrast, he pours scorn on Bo Yibo, partly because of his 1967 accusation that Chen sold out to the KMT when he had been imprisoned with Liu Shaoqi in 1936 - a charge he repeated in 1984 - but more significantly because Bo was instrumental in the 1987 downfall of Hu.

Chen Xiaonong’s defence of his father’s reputation thus differs from the orthodox account of the Cultural Revolution in many ways. Rather than an architect of the catastrophe, Chen is portrayed as an individual bent on defending the masses against the ravages of corrupt cadres. A scholar as dedicated to the understanding of Chinese tradition as he is to the development of Marxist theory, he even goes out of his way to save cultural relics from destruction, a mission of mercy usually reserved for the Zhou Enlai story. Used as a scapegoat for the actions of others in the Party elite, many of whom have never been investigated or punished for the parts they played, his emphasis on raising production really makes him a precursor of Hu Yaobang. While such claims are undoubtedly controversial, this argument is based on a comprehensive critique of Party journals and influential accounts written by figures such as Wang Dongxing.⁴ By repeatedly pointing out that the discrepancies and gaps that exist in such versions of the Cultural Revolution cannot be resolved until the archives are opened, the burden of proof is left lying on the shoulders of those who hold power in China today.

4. Wang Dongxing, *Mao Zedong yu Lin Biao fangeming jituan de douzheng* (*Mao Zedong’s Struggle Against the Lin Biao Counter-revolutionary Group*) (Beijing: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe, 1997).

Responsibility at the Periphery

The tendency to blame the Cultural Revolution on a limited group of radicals is also called into question from the very different geographical and political perspective that is provided by the interviews in *Memories of Tibet*. Tao Changsong, a Han graduate of Huadong University who volunteered to go to Tibet in 1960 where he became a Red Guard Leader and deputy director of the Revolutionary Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) only to be purged after the Cultural Revolution, insists that the Red Guards in Tibet never acted on their own initiative and always followed orders from the Centre. Incidents like the suppression of the 1969 rebellion were definitely ordered by Beijing, he maintains, while attempts by the Tibetan Party to limit responsibility to the Gang of Four are riddled with inconsistency and overlook the fact that directives must have been approved by Mao and signed by Zhou Enlai. Blaming poor communications for what happened in Tibet is dismissed by Jiuni,⁵ a government employee who worked for the military during the Cultural Revolution, who even claims that in some ways communicating the intentions of the centre was easier in the days before the Internet and mobile phones.

Blame is not only allocated to the Centre in Beijing, though. There is also some agreement among the interviewees that many of those who have held power in Tibet since the end of the Cultural Revolution have yet to be brought to account for their previous misdemeanour. While one interviewee describes the current situation as “those with power have no culture, those with culture have no power,”⁶ another can even conclude that recent policies show that the “extreme left” has come back to power in the region.⁷ Tao Changsong is particularly indignant that many of those who have climbed to high office have done so as a reward for making unfounded accusations against figures like himself. Tao specifically challenges Ren Rong⁸ to defend a recent book in which he describes the killing of soldiers and cadres by “rebels” and “counter-revolutionaries” in the 1969 uprising, without giving any account of the repression that followed.

The central theme of this book, however, is the question of whether the Cultural Revolution in Tibet was imposed by Han outsiders or whether it had the active support of indigenous peoples. An historical and theoretical context for this argument is thus provided by the attachment as appendices of two articles that originally appeared in

5. Weise has given names to many of the interviewees to protect their identity. She also transliterates Tibetan names into Chinese characters without giving the original. The Chinese versions that she gives for names will be used here.

6. Testimony of Laba, Tibetan graduate of Shanghai Drama Academy, member of radical faction during Cultural Revolution and presently working for a cultural organisation in the TAR, p. 207.

7. Testimony of Pubu.

8. Ren served on the military commission of the Tibet Military Region in the 1960s and became First Secretary of the TAR CCP in 1971.

the English journal, *New Left Review*. These are the thesis produced by Wang Lixiong, one of China's foremost experts on Tibet, that the movement had grass-roots support and the counter-argument by British-based historian Tsering Shakya.⁹ At first glance, the way in which the Tibetan interviewees invariably agree that all ethnic groups were carried away by the factional struggles, took an active part in the activities of the Red Guards and the radical faction, and describe the unquestioned loyalty they felt to Mao Zedong at the time, tends to support Wang's thesis that most of the destruction was wrought by locals. The likening of this fanaticism to the mysticism of Tibetan religion by some of the interviewees also fits his view that Maoism became a kind of substitute religion for Lamaism at the time.

The degree of commitment of local people to the movement has to be called into question, however, by sparks of humanity that lend credence to Shakya's view that destructive actions were forced on unwilling Tibetans by a totalitarian Chinese system. One of those who was involved in the arrest of the Panchen Lama and his family by a group of Tibetan teachers and students, for example, tells of how the captors tried to ease the pain of his sister-in-law by surreptitiously putting their feet under her knees to protect them from grinding against the wooden planks on the floor the truck which was taking her to stand trial. Stories are also told of how people used to come out in the evenings to give food to the lamas who had been struggled against during the day, how relics were scattered and hidden among various people so they could be retrieved later and how people eventually returned the materials they had looted from monasteries to build their homes.

Thankfully, Weise lets such interviews express for themselves the complex motives that moved Tibetans to get involved in the destruction, rather than trying to force them into one of the contending arguments presented in the appendices. Many of those interviewed are refreshingly frank about the need to explain their personal involvement, which involves a mixture of idealism, self-preservation and sheer incomprehension that was exacerbated by the language barrier. While those with a dubious class background felt a special need to prove their political credentials by getting involved, all faced the mundane reality that withdrawal from the movement meant loss of *hukou* and food rations. Several are bold enough to admit that the period was "fun" (*hao wan*), because they were able to travel freely with friends all over China without paying for food, transport or lodging, or due to the sheer drama of the times. Then there were the criminals and petty crooks from the bottom rungs of society who rose to positions of power. One such case is the secretary of the neighbourhood committee who spent his days drinking and playing

9. Wang Lixiong, "Reflections on Tibet," *New Left Review*, No. 14, March–April 2002, pp. 79–111; Tsering Shakya, "Blood in the Snows: Reply to Wang Lixiong," *New Left Review*, No. 15, May–June 2002, pp. 39–60.

mah-jong and defied the government by driving expensive cars with flashing police lights through Lhasa. His daughter now owns a restaurant near the Potala Palace.

Finally there were those who remained nonplussed by the whole affair, as illustrated by the story told by the Buddhist monk turned Red Guard which describes how people thought that Mao's bed had been invaded by some kind of a horned-demon when they heard that there was a "Khrushchev sleeping by his side." The author's own mother, a cadre in the Tibet Cadre School at the time, recalls embarrassing situations that arose when people had difficulty remembering and responding to their new names of "Mao" and "Lin," adopted when Tibetan names were dismissed as belonging to the "Four Olds."

The mixture of pragmatism and idealism is sometimes encapsulated in the narrative of a single individual, as when Jiuni claims that the destruction of religious objects was a matter of political survival but can still accept that the majority were in fact driven by a kind of communist idealism when she is pressed on the matter. She accepts that her opinions could be influenced by the way in which she was brought up in a military environment, where Tibetans were treated strictly on a par with the Han. Maybe this can explain how she can enthusiastically approve of the mass trial and execution of the middle-aged nun who led the Nyemo Incident, an uprising in which a PLA unit was massacred and mutilated. She expresses no qualms in describing how she joined the crowds in spitting on the woman as she was dragged from the sports stadium to the execution ground with a placard round her neck and even now is unable to hold back her tears as she recalls the way in which the sleeping soldiers were taken by surprise.

It is perhaps less surprising that some of the Han interviewees should reject the view that ethnic tensions were central to the violence in Tibet. Tao Changsong sees such an argument as a mere diversion from the fact that extreme leftism was at the root of the problems, a situation that he claims still exists. He thus rejects the proposition that the 1969 revolt was the work of the Dalai Lama and an attempt by the Tibetans to expel the "Red Han," describing how he forged friendships with Tibetan prisoners when he himself was incarcerated under charges of having been a leader of the 1969 rebellion. He describes how many Han cadres and county officials tried to warn the Tibetans not to run from the military or they would be treated as "rebels." Yet it is a mixture of condescending disdain and pity that comes over when he describes how the "naïve" (*lao shi*) Tibetans even said "thank you" when they were later granted meagre sums of money as compensation for their massacred relatives. Shakya's portrayal of the colonial attitude of Han intellectuals is brought to mind.

Admissions of the brutal reprisals inflicted on the local population by the PLA also reinforce Shakya's argument that the Cultural Revolution in Tibet involved a form of colonialism that made it

different from the rest of China. The view that ethnic conflict did not play a part in the Cultural Revolution in Tibet wears particularly thin in accounts of what occurred in rural areas. Jiuni herself describes how those who took part in the Nyemo Incident were motivated by calls for secession, claims that the Dalai Lama was returning and a perception of the PLA as the “Red Han.” The account of the 1969 uprising given by the Tibetan Pubu, who was a member of the unit sent to investigate a particularly nasty incident that took place in Chamdo prefecture, makes it clear that the call went out for “eaters of tsampa (barley flour) to unite and defeat the eaters of rice.” These culinary preferences became crucial in deciding the fate of individual cadres, as were tests of their ability to read out loud from scripture in order to prove their religious conviction. One ill-fated secretary was able to save himself from punishment by reading out an inscription carved on a mountainside, only to be sentenced to several years in prison later as a “rebel” for having done so. One particularly atrocious scene occurred after some village women killed a number of soldiers billeted nearby with a rudimentary bomb. Two women took in a survivor and fed him, only to strangle him as he washed his feet. When the PLA took its revenge, one woman was spared because she was pregnant but the other was mutilated and shot, a fate shared by some 30 others at the time. But Pubu also claims that most of the killing that took place as the PLA put down the “rebellion” was carried out by civilians who saw all Tibetans as “rebels.”

That the disturbance at Nyemo was related to the independence movement is a view shared by the high-ranking Tibetan military cadre Bashang. Yet he also draws attention to the complex mixture of politics and religion when he describes how the leader of the rebellion was not only a nun but also a member of the radical faction and her chief aides were not former participants in the resistance to the 1959 invasion but emancipated serfs. This mixture of religion and politics again lends some support to Wang Lixiong’s view that Maoism was a substitute for the Lamaism of which a highly spiritual people had been deprived in the years prior to the Cultural Revolution. In the same vein, a number of the interviewees describe how the most radical activists of the time have tended to revert to devout Buddhism, hoping to escape the fruits of their bad actions as death approaches and expectations of riches and positions of officialdom have failed to materialize. Unfortunately for those who would like to don the saffron robe again, their way is barred after having taken part in activities such as campaigns to kill flies and dogs and the destruction of stupas and holy books.

Shakya provides something of an explanation for these conflicting narratives when he points out that the political struggle between the “two lines” that occurred all over China was confined to the towns in Tibet, while the countryside was subjected to a broader attack on Tibetan culture demanded by the Central Committee. Concerning the complex motives of those who carried out the violence, perhaps the

only explanation that can be derived from a project of this kind is summed up by Dawaciren, a Tibetan graduate of Tsinghua University who later became a curator at the Potala Palace Museum and a professor of Tibetan literature at Tibet University, who asserts that all were participants in the Cultural Revolution, and all were also victims and that people are just very complicated creatures driven by fear, self-preservation and feelings of inevitability.

Rewriting the Cultural Revolution for Today

Both *Memories of Tibet* and *The Last Recollections of Chen Boda* are certainly interesting for the historian. Yet they are also important as threads of the broader debate on the past that is taking place in the Chinese-language press outside China and increasingly in Chinese cyberspace.¹⁰ Connections between the Cultural Revolution and the under-currents of social discontent that have grown under “reform and opening” can certainly be seen when Chen Boda describes how his support for Mao’s call to struggle against capitalist roaders in the Party arose after he became aware of incidents such as the requisitioning of property by cadres to establish exclusive clubs, like the one in Beijing developed by Yang Shangkun equipped with swimming pool and mah-jong tables. When Dawaciren accepts that much of the destruction in Tibet was due to local people, he takes the opportunity to add that the cultural heritage in the most advanced areas of China has since been sacrificed on the altar of economic development, despite Jiang Zemin’s claim that the CCP is an organization that represents advanced culture. The same interviewee even expresses his concern that the suppression of the Falun Gong indicates that the time is ripe for something like the Cultural Revolution to occur again. That Dawaciren passed away in 2002 may have emboldened Weise to allow this taboo subject to be broached.

Such pessimism about the possibility of a recurrence is not universal, however. A figure like the Muslim Yan Zhenzhong struggles to describe how the blind loyalty he felt for Mao and the

10. Some retrospection on the 40th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution can be seen on PRC-based websites, such as the *Qiangguo luntan* run by *People’s Daily*. That there remain limits on such discussion is shown by the fact that Weise’s own interesting blog on Tibetan culture was blocked by the PRC authorities on 28 July 2006 on the orders of the CCP United Front Department. Weise puts this down to her discussion of a variety of Tibetan issues, including a forum on the Cultural Revolution, the impact of the new Tibetan railroad on local culture and health, but above all because she posted a birthday greeting to the Dalai Lama on the website. See interview with Voice of America (Chinese) at <http://www.voanews.com/chinese/2006-07-30-voa37.cfm> (cached version available via Google). Chinese newspapers and magazines outside the PRC did provide a space for the 40th anniversary to be discussed by those inside the PRC as well as those who were involved in Hong Kong. See in particular *Ming Bao yuekan*, No. 5 (2006), pp. 22–36; *Kaifang*, No. 232 (March 2006), pp. 18–28 (special section discussing *Memories of Tibet*); and the series of retrospective articles published in May 2006 by the *China Times* (Taiwan).

Party drove him to engage in violence at the time, but maintains that the circumstances are entirely different now. Yet the fact that both *Chen Boda* and *Memories of Tibet* frequently stress the positive aspects of the Cultural Revolution is symptomatic of a growing tendency to revise the history of the period from the perspective of growing inequality in today's China. Mao's defence of the common people is not only lauded by Chen Boda. A figure like the monk-turned-Red Guard, Qiangbarenqing dreads the possibility of being reincarnated as a Han Chinese, but he still remembers how he once woke up in hospital after an operation and called out "Long live Chairman Mao" as he saw the lights illuminating the ward. He blames the destruction of the monasteries on the Gang of Four and insists that Mao believed in religious freedom. Qiangbarenqing's reverence for Mao is partly because he once saw an old photograph of him flanked by the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, but it is also because he believes that Mao took the side of the masses.

Aside from Mao, the Cultural Revolution is seen by both Chen Boda and many of the Tibetans interviewed by Weise as having had a number of positive aspects. For Chen it should be praised for alleviating blind respect for authority and giving the Chinese people their first experience of direct participation in national politics and the capacity for independent thinking that took wings in later years. He is particularly proud of the way in which the "16 Articles" he drafted established important and valid principles, such as the need for universal elections and scrutiny of the leadership by the masses, the protection of the rights of free speech for the minority, the rights of the masses to educate and liberate themselves, and the use of argument instead of force.

For Qiangbarenqing, the Cultural Revolution was a form of liberation because it re-educated Buddhists and taught them about concepts such as Darwinian evolution. The fact that women did not suffer nightmares after they entered temple from which they had been forbidden and the absence of any mystical signs after the destruction of Buddhist effigies led to an erosion of religious faith and a new kind of daring attitude. Even the son of a "living Buddha"¹¹ whose family suffered terribly during the Cultural Revolution can still claim that it liberated Tibetans from the oppression of the old order and that most people still support the CCP and have a positive view of Mao as a result. Dawaciren argues that the view he was given during his undergraduate studies that Tibetan culture and religion are responsible for holding Tibet back is widely held today, and that Tibetans need to consider whether there may be some truth in the view that religion in general is a force that prevents liberation.

Obviously the oral recollections of one of the chief architects of the Cultural Revolution and some of its most active grass roots participants in Tibet can be expected to result in a sympathetic

11. Demu Wangjiuduoji.

portrayal of the crisis years.¹² Yet such memories of the Cultural Revolution may also say as much about present day Chinese society as they do about the past. As is so often the case with oral history, the individual story often expresses more than the explanations offered by social scientists. While the tragedy of Chen Boda is of epic proportions, perhaps a more appropriate allegory for the common people of China is provided the story of the “nun,” a cadre in Tibet so-called by the local people due to her selfless lifestyle, cropped hair and scrupulous honesty in handling the finances of the local cooperative. When she died in the mid-1980s the organization decided to give her house to her family as a token of thanks, who promptly converted it into a three-story building and now rent it to outsiders. Then there is the testament of the anonymous Tibetan cadre who recalls how she followed the political tide as a teenage girl with little understanding of what was going on, only to become even more confused when those who had been condemned as “ghosts and serpents” later rose to become leaders, suddenly transformed into elements of the “united front” after having once been members of an “exploiting class.” “Aren’t there a lot of nannies now?” she remarks. “Some officials have two or three nannies at home, what is the difference between them and the exploiters of the past?”

12. This argument is with respect to *Memories of Tibet* is made the discussion of the book in Dawacairen that appeared in *Kaifang*. See Dawacairen, “Wenge: kongju zhudao de haojie” (“The Cultural Revolution: A Disaster Driven by Terror”), *Kaifang*, No. 232 (March 2006), pp 19–22; Cai Yongmei, “Wei xizang wenge lishi zuo zheng” (“Testimony to the Cultural Revolution in Tibet”), *Kaifang*, No. 232 (March 2006), pp. 22–24.