

drawn from years of research into what happened at Qinghua University in Beijing, Xu Hailiang's tentative conclusions based on the case of the Cultural Revolution in Wuhan, of which he is *the* master historian (*pace* Wang Shaoguang), and the prolific He Shu, stupendously knowledgeable chronicler of the movement in his home of Chongqing – none of them claim in the *Minutes* to have understood what the Cultural Revolution was *all* about or assert that on a national level, it was *really* like *that* or like *this* (because “that’s what my data show”!).

Conference participants come out in favour of the intrinsic value of methodological “eclecticism.” Though the *Minutes* record a lively debate on, in particular, the pros and cons of oral history, nobody really objected on serious grounds to the commonsense position that if information and understanding is what you seek, you do so with whatever tools you have, all of them, rather than only a fraction of the total in the interest of methodological “purity.” Xu Youyu from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences served as one of two (and by far the most effective) presenter of foreign research trends, while Chen Donglin from the Contemporary China Research Institute read a paper that situated a thoughtful analysis of the Cultural Revolution in the context of repeated post-1949 attempts to reform China’s political system. Where the conference broke particularly important new ground as far as sensitive topics and approaches are concerned was in the case of one presentation by Wu Di – a scholar of the Xibo nationality, best known outside China for his work on the Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia (reviewed in *CQ* No. 140, pp. 1194–95) – who spoke on collaboration (pp. 113–18) as a trope for dealing with inter-ethnic relations in the Cultural Revolution.

Close to the end, the *Minutes* record one participant lamenting the fact that three decades after it came to a close with the death of Mao Zedong, the Cultural Revolution is being “covered up, forgotten, misinterpreted, and ‘transformed and abused’ at will.” And if that is not in itself bad enough, he charged, an even bigger problem is the fact that there seem to be so few younger scholars showing an interest in researching, interpreting, understanding and teaching its history: “We who are here today are in our fifties; in another ten years’ time, if it’s still only members of our generation meeting like this, then the study of the Cultural Revolution may well face the risk of becoming an “extinct subject (*juexue*)!” (p. 173). Unlike him, I believe there are grounds for optimism and that what he fears will not come to pass, although a review like this is not the medium for arguing what is really a tangential point. But to reduce by just a little the likelihood of the extinction of the subject, I permit myself here to switch from review to “pledge mode” and ask interested *CQ* readers to make your personal contributions to the furthering of independent historical scholarship inside China on the Cultural Revolution by purchasing this fine book!

MICHAEL SCHOENHALS

Bold Plum: With the Guerrillas in China's War against Japan

HSIAO LI LINDSAY

Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, 2006

359 pp. \$19.95

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In early December 1941, less than six months after they married, Hsiao Li and Michael Lindsay escaped inevitable internment in Japanese-occupied Beijing by fleeing westwards into the Chinese Communists’ Jinchaji Base Area. Professor

Lindsay had been sending supplies and equipment to the Communists (CCP) since 1938, and he accepted formal appointment as technical advisor and instructor in the Jinchaji Military Region in May 1942. The flight from Beijing was planned with CCP help, and the newly-weds were vigilantly protected by CCP guerrillas during their astonishing dart-and-dodge, zigzagged treks through the hill country of Hebei and Shanxi provinces through the next two-and-a-half years (and with a newborn baby from October 1942). In *Bold Plum*, Hsiao Li Lindsay offers a gripping account of the couple's years with the resistance fighters of north China and, from mid-1944, their 18-month sojourn in Yan'an. The story is plainly told, and that is probably what makes it so persuasive and compelling.

The author penned her story in 1947, just a year or so after the couple left Yan'an (November 1945), and in what must have been for her the astonishing peace, quiet and comfort of Cambridge, Boston. She wrote it in English. The text has twice been translated into and published in Chinese (1975 and 1991), but non-Chinese readers have had to wait until now for the English original – reduced to about 320 printed pages (one-third of the Hsiao Li Lindsay's manuscript) by son and editor James Lindsay. Published by Lulu Press in 2006, *Bold Plum* is a major addition to the behind-the-lines eyewitness accounts we have of the Chinese Communist movement during the Sino-Japanese war. More than that, it offers the perspective and impressions of a highly educated young Chinese woman who, by virtue of her marriage to one of the CCP's "international friends," was somewhat unwittingly caught up in the Communists' wartime mobilizations in the villages of occupied north China.

Li Hsiao Li's gentry-class parents ensured that their daughters were well educated, and they warned against political activism; Hsiao Li says that she "had always been taught by elders, 'It is forbidden to discuss politics'" (p. 76). As her school's representative in 1934, she expressed concerns about a new examination regulation, and then found herself accused of being a "secret Communist agent." Her family whisked her away from Taiyuan to the relative safety of Beijing; there she completed her secondary education and, in mid-1937, gained admission to Yanjing University. All that she really knew about the Communists at the time came from her Kuomintang-prescribed high school textbooks and the constant rumours about Communist manipulation of student politics. So she was surprised to learn in 1939 that her British tutor was sending medicines and radio equipment into the Communists' guerrilla zones. He told her that he "admired the Communist Army because they were doing a good job fighting against the Japanese" (p. 76), but that this did not mean he sided with the CCP against the Kuomintang (p. 87). He was, says Hsiao Li, "the first person who made me think about practical politics" (p. 79).

In late 1941, therefore, a politically unschooled and naïve young woman, aged 25, was wrenched from the serenity and comfort of the Yanjing campus to begin a life of constant danger, dramatic escapes and great physical hardship. Hsiao Li tells her story simply, almost bluntly. Her aim, say the book's editors, was to tell the world about "the bravery, fortitude and suffering of the Chinese people during the war" (p. 23), but this point is implicit throughout the narrative more than it is explicitly argued or asserted. The book is not politically driven, nor is hindsight fed into the story it records. The immediate and local are described for us with fine, sharp detail by a sensitive participant, and we are, for the most part, left to form our own conclusions about broad patterns and processes. The author describes only what she herself experienced and saw (just occasionally she notes a rumour or piece of gossip), and tends to understate the drama of her story; the reader, nevertheless, cannot help but be struck by its drama.

In documenting her personal journey from privileged urbanite to rural guerrilla, Hsiao Li Lindsay provides insights into a number of issues of interest to historians of

modern China. For example, she details for us her gentry-class family's history, setting it in the context of the fading Qing regime and the rise of warlordism (her father served Yan Xishan's warlord regime in Shanxi). Her experience of university education invites further reflection on the significant role played by Yanjing University faculty members, both Chinese and foreign, in educational reform in Republican China, and in the reformist and revolutionary politics of the period. A related theme is the involvement of foreigners ("international friends") in the Communist movement during the resistance war. The book's central focus is the guerrilla movement in the CCP's Jinchaji base; Hsiao Li's portrayals of guerrilla intelligence during the emergencies in which she participated often illustrate the very thin line between resistance and collaboration, and the highly ambiguous, fluid nature of "puppet" governments behind the enemy lines. The astonishingly generous help that she and her husband were offered by destitute families is regularly noted. So, too, is the willing help offered by landlord families whose incomes had been reduced by the CCP's rent reduction policies. This leaves us to reflect on the complex and often unpredictable nature on the Party's relationships with local elites in this period. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in *Bold Plum* we have an uncontrived, personal account by an "educated youth" of her experience of village life that was not in the mould of CCP's *xiaxiang* (sent-down youth) strategy. Hsiao Li tells us that she is "Bold Plum"; her family name Li translates as "plum", and "the 'bold' refers to the fact that I broke through multiple restrictions as a Chinese woman growing up during the Sino-Japanese War" (<http://www.tucacas.info/brushstrokebooks/boldplumintro2.htm>).

If the book is to be reprinted or digitized, some small additions could improve it. I would have liked the aid of a more detailed map, one that includes most of the places mentioned in the text and that identifies Japanese strongholds and the more secure CCP zones; this detail would enable the reader better to visualize the author's journeys (the map on pages 24–23 is useful but sketchy). Also, an appendix that lists and identifies the many significant people who are part of Hsiao Li's story would be helpful. Some readers might tire of the dense detail, but I am reluctant to recommend much chopping; the vivid description of local people, villages and terrains is one of the book's merits.

Bold Plum is a wonderful publication. It sets out one woman's personal experience of a segment of CCP history, the official record of which was quickly sanitized by Party orthodoxy and then mythologized. The post-Mao deconstruction of the Maoist myths is a healthy development, but one that runs the risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Hsiao Li Lindsay's account of her years with the Communist guerrillas helps to re-humanize and restore shades of grey to a moment in China's history that should have a place in China's present. Her book deserves to be widely read.

PAULINE KEATING

Crimson Rain: Seven Centuries of Violence in a Chinese County

WILLIAM T. ROWE

Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006

xiii + 437 pp. \$60.00

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The emphasis placed by China's Confucian-influenced "civil" culture on the cultivation of harmony in personal, social and political relations has often resulted in