

SONG OF THE GRASSLANDS

A NEW TANG DYNASTY TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH TEMTSELT SHOBSHUUD

The leader of the Inner Mongolian People's Party observes that failure of the Chinese authorities to fully address the genocidal persecution of Mongols in political movements presents a serious impediment to ethnic reconciliation in China.

My Chinese name is Xi Haiming, in Mongolian, Temtselst Shobshuud. I graduated from the History Department of Inner Mongolia University.

In 1981, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) issued Document 28, which allowed Han Chinese to immigrate to Inner Mongolia. But Inner Mongolians felt there was already an ecological imbalance, and there was a sense that Mongolian culture was in a state of crisis. In ecological terms, a big influx of Han Chinese would be more than our nomadic economy could bear. We would end up with more people than sheep and cattle; the grasslands would decline, and ultimately there would be desertification. Actually, Mongols had raised this issue previously, but CCP officials didn't listen. They felt the Mongols were speaking with an ethnic bias or that they had separatist tendencies.

It was only when the sandstorms reached Beijing that the CCP sat up and took note of this issue and finally started to take some countermeasures. I think that if they had done this earlier, the sandstorm would not have hit Beijing or affected East Asia. This demonstrates, first, that the CCP doesn't trust the Mongols (and of course it doesn't trust Han Chinese either; this is its morbid psychology), and second, that it lacks scientific knowledge on the subject. We might say that power does not mean knowledge in this case. Ultimately, nature exacts its revenge; the Mongols have become the victims of Beijing's policies, but the Chinese people, including those in Beijing, have been affected by these sandstorms.

Of course, when we raised this issue, it wasn't for the sake of China, but for our own survival. In 1982, we staged a student uprising in which nearly 10,000 students in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region refused to attend classes. We were on strike for 28 days, demanding that the CCP rescind Document 28. But the CCP was immovable on this issue and

resorted to hard and soft tactics in its desire to suppress our opposition. Another consideration was that the Tibet issue had become internationalized, and the CCP didn't want the same thing to happen with Inner Mongolia.

Finally there were some tradeoffs and the two sides reached a compromise. A consideration on our part was: can sheep reason with a wolf? Perhaps that's not an apt example, but what I mean to say is that in the end we made some compromises, and we let them offer some concessions. Earlier, Party Secretary Hu Yaobang's office had issued a statement declaring that all religions must be ruled over. Hu Yaobang also wrote an article in which he said, "This disruption by the students in Inner Mongolia is not the same as what has happened in Xinjiang and Tibet, and we must take tough action." If we look at the historical background, perhaps Hu Yaobang felt he had made too many concessions on the Tibet issue and had been attacked for it. That was when Zhao Ziyang was head of the State Council. The CCP finally issued a communiqué saying that a student strike was not conducive to unity and stability, but that it would certainly accept student views that were reasonable. So the matter was resolved.

Of course, before the 1982 student movement we had already been organizing ourselves and choosing leaders, and we formed a network to support us for the long term. But this is something that doesn't happen in a day or two by shouting a few slogans at a demonstration or two—just because the CCP made some concessions, that didn't mean we'd won, so we kept the movement going.

The CCP remained suspicious of us. For 10 years, whenever I went out, they followed me. They installed listening devices in our homes, or they'd resort to going after our relatives and friends, prying and spying the way the CCP does, really a pain. But then maybe that's just the way the CCP maintains its political power. So that's the way it went. Then in 1991, we set up some cultural groups. We used cultural activities, because political activities would have been suppressed immediately. Even at that, ultimately two of our organizations were suppressed, and people were arrested while they investigated who was behind the organizations. Eventually they tried to detain me, too, but I fled to Outer Mongolia and from there to Germany.

Our goal in Inner Mongolia is for Mongols to be their own masters, because this is our sky, our land. This is where our

ancestors lived. And our grasslands were originally excellent, what the Ballad of Mulan calls “a vast sky and endless plain where the wind blows through the grass, and sheep and cattle graze.” That is gone. Now it’s a vista of sand, because of humans. I guess Han Chinese aren’t happy with this, either—they come to Inner Mongolia and there’s no grassland, just a desert. But from our point of view, this is our destiny, our land, and we have no control over it; we have to stand by while other people destroy it. If you want to trash your own home, that’s your business, but if other people come to your home and turn it into a rubbish heap—that’s why it’s a different feeling for us than for the Han Chinese. Viewing Inner Mongolia’s situation from a rational point of view, independence would be very difficult, because the CCP’s immigration policy has resulted in 80 percent or more of the population being Han Chinese. But without independence, we have no future; we can only be assimilated, because there are 1.3 billion Chinese—or is it 1.5 billion?—a vast sea of them, coming to drown us. . . .

The original Inner Mongolian People’s Party (IMPP) was founded as early as 1925. It was influenced at the time by the Third International¹ and was supported by the Communist parties of the USSR and Outer Mongolia. The IMPP was a nationalist-democratic political party. After the CCP and the Kuomintang (KMT) split, it split too, one part going to the KMT and one part remaining close to the Comintern, but with no direct connection to the Chinese Communist Party at the time (whatever the CCP has since claimed). Later in 1945, as Japan was about to be defeated, Mongols in the eastern part of Inner Mongolia felt they would stay out of this struggle between the KMT and the CCP, and would follow their own path. The CCP consisted mainly of the working class, but Mongolia had no industrial proletarian class, so a class struggle like the CCP was carrying out wasn’t relevant to Inner Mongolia. So the Mongols revived the IMPP.

Later Ulanhu,² on behalf of the CCP, incorporated the IMPP into the CCP and announced its dissolution. Mongols followed the CCP either willingly or because they had no choice. Because the CCP said it wanted to liberate all humankind, smaller ethnic groups thought the CCP believed in the principle of ethnic identity. Mao Zedong had been saying for 35 years that after the Japanese were defeated, we could be independent or form a China Federation—but of course that was all a lie. Later, he came up with the notion of so-called autonomy. But it was not real ethnic autonomy—it was regional ethnic autonomy, which would be gradual. In other words, he deceived the Mongols. But with the Cold War going on at the time, and other international considerations, Mongols didn’t express their dissatisfaction in open resistance. The rest is history.

When the Cultural Revolution came along, the CCP brought up these old accounts again to rationalize its massacres and suppression of the Mongols. It said that although the IMPP looked like it had been disbanded, it was actually still carrying on covert activities, and that its goal was to unite Inner and Outer Mongolia. On this pretext, the CCP undertook what amounts to a genocidal massacre in Inner Mongolia, killing 50,000–60,000 Mongols.

Of course I knew about all this. After my grandfather was

killed, his skull was smashed—I saw the body. Afterwards they said it was suicide, that he had jumped into a well to cut himself off from the Party and from the people. I saw this, and later I heard and read about so many other tragedies like his. I went to university—we were the first class accepted after the restoration of the college entrance exam, the class of 1977—and when Mongol students talked among themselves, in almost every family someone had been killed or wounded or maimed. I gained an even greater understanding of events then. In the capital Hohhot, someone named Dalahan wrote a lot of big character posters exposing the tragedy of the IMPP. This person’s real name was Wang Jinxi. He was later arrested by the Communists, imprisoned for a long time and died after being released.

Then there was a woman named Jin Xueyun, who was a cadre in the Inner Mongolia Goods and Materials Bureau and a member of the Hui minority, whose husband Hazia was a Mongol. After she was arrested, she was gang-raped, and finally her back was broken from being bent over a stool. In my hometown of Dugui Village there was a woman named Mulan who was kicked twice in the vagina. We also heard about a father-in-law and his daughter-in-law who were both stripped naked and told, you Mongols have no morals, you’re just like beasts, and so they were tied up together. There are some other things I know, like a couple who were labeled members of the IMPP, and they were locked up with their children—one seven years old and the other even younger—and their parents. In the Inner Mongolia Military District, there was an old man, over 70 years old, and his son and daughter-in-law were both arrested as members of the IMPP. The old man couldn’t speak Chinese very well and he didn’t know how to survive in the city, but they wanted to get rid of people like him, who were actually from families of revolutionary cadres but had been reduced to—what? To “bad elements.” The old man eventually froze to death on his way home. You can read about a lot of things like this.

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As for the IMPP we’ve formed now—it has no links to the historical IMPP. The reason we wanted to use this name was primarily so that we don’t forget this period of history and the massacres that occurred. We also want to change this situation where we allowed ourselves to be trampled upon and massacred, passively allowed ourselves to be slaughtered. We want to strive to be masters of our own fate. This is our way of thinking and our intention. So I really like the book that Yuan Hongbing wrote after leaving the country, entitled *Freedom at Sunset*.³ We actually went to school together. I’m not a literary scholar, so I can’t critique his book, but I feel that in writing this book, as a Han Chinese who lived in Inner Mongolia, he represents the conscience of the Han Chinese, as well as moral courage. From that standpoint, I want to express my deep gratitude to him.

In the case of the Holocaust, in which so many Jews were killed, after the war, Germany had a change of heart. When Brandt went to Warsaw, he knelt at the monument to the Jews.⁴



A not-so-welcome presence: People's Liberation Army soldiers on patrol during cavalry training in the IMAR. Photo: Sinopix

But the CCP's way of righting their wrongs against the Mongols was, in fact, just a deception, a way to make them feel better by giving us a little money. When they were done, that was the end of it. The true killers all went unpunished because they were outside of the law. Some people used this past experience as an opportunity to become officials, and they're still in office. After 1981, when ethnic conflicts caused problems, these people rose even higher on the ladder.

Yuan Hongbing mentions many kinds of criminal torture in his book. For example, it's really cold in Inner Mongolia, and in the winter of 1968, when things were at their craziest, people were stripped and sent outside to freeze in a punishment called "cool reflection." After someone had frozen, they would heat up one of the coal ovens that we all used at the time, and when the coals turned red, they would put people on it and burn them. That was called "warm hospitality." I didn't see this myself, but I heard about it.

There was an incident that took place in Baynnur League, where a man was actually cooked to death. He didn't want to inform on anyone, since that person would then be arrested. He was a brave guy, but in the end he couldn't stand it. An interrogator was sitting right next to him, and this guy wrapped both of his arms around the oven and held on until he died. Later, some people tried to pry his hands loose, but they had to smash the bones with a hammer. Torture methods like this were not described in books in the past. The earliest book on this subject was written by a Tumen major general who wrote about Kang Sheng⁵ and the IMPP. Of course he had

to refer to these incidents discreetly, because if he made direct references to them, his book would never have been published.

Later, after I left the country, I read Song Yongyi's book *Massacres During the Cultural Revolution*.⁶ I bought a copy in London. There's a chapter in it called "Massacre of the Inner Mongolian People's Party." Recently in Inner Mongolia, a person called Aideng Geiji—he gave himself this name, which he translated from the Chinese characters for "golden world"—wrote a book called *Uncovering a Record of Tragedy*, which describes the tortures that took place in more detail. Women being gang-raped, for example—there's a lot of that kind of thing. Even though some of the victims are dead now, it's still a difficult subject, because of the children. I have a friend whose mother was gang-raped, and it wasn't easy for her to talk about it with her children or her husband. This is something all families have suffered, this kind of tragedy.

So it makes me really happy that Yuan Hongbing has taken this up. He brings up the point that some Chinese, including those in the overseas democracy movement, say that the Cultural Revolution was a disaster for all ethnic groups, meaning that Han Chinese were denounced as well as Mongols. But Yuan Hongbing says that in Mongolia the persecution amounted to genocide, and I agree with him. If we reflect on this period of history, if the CCP or the Chinese people in good conscience really want to resolve this issue—that is to say, if all ethnic groups are to live together in harmony, whether politically independent or in some kind of federation or whatever, if we are to live happily and feel at ease together,

then I think there must be some sort of accounting for this period of history. The CCP is just toying with the Mongols, coaxing them along, allowing them to let off some steam. They want us to forget.

This is their approach to Tiananmen as well: let it be forgotten. First they called it a riot, but now it's just little disturbance, and part of the past. At one time there was a slogan in Inner Mongolia: "Look ahead in unity." It meant, don't mention what is past. But the world talks about Jewish history, and the Germans reflect on it. I don't think this means we brood on it, or want revenge or harbor resentment, but that we will be able to take a more magnanimous view in the future towards both victims and victimizers.

Western Christianity speaks of repentance. I discussed this with some Han Chinese friends once, asking why so many were killed. Not one person has ever said, from their heart, please forgive me. There's really no way to place blame—people say it was the Gang of Four, or they were young, they were obeying the Party, they were forced to do what they did—but not all of those forms of torture were written down by the higher-ups for people to use in persecuting others; some of it was just pure human evil. Under an evil system like Chinese Communism, a kind of extreme behavior occurs, and people become devils. Han culture always talks about Confucian and Mencian moral theory—that human nature is originally good—and this is something we all discussed back then. I think everyone has both God and the devil in them. If you practice a religious discipline, or if you make effort to become more virtuous, maybe in the end God will be your master. But if you follow the path of evil, in the end you will become a devil.

That's what happened in the Cultural Revolution. Those people weren't necessarily born bad; it's the Communist system that turns people into devils—that's what caused the tragedy in Inner Mongolia. So I think we can't look back at this historical period and just say, oh, that's all in the past. I think we should draw lessons from remembering that painful experience; we should reflect in order to herald in a better future. Otherwise, these things will never be undone.

I used to think that Han Chinese lacked consciences. I've talked about this with some Chinese people. One person named Wu Jiang from Peking University came to see me about a Cultural Revolution Museum he wanted to establish. I asked him, why is it that Chinese aren't able to reflect on their history? The Russians have reflected on their past, the Germans have too, so why haven't the Chinese? He just stood there and didn't say anything. I pressed him, and he said it was the Gang of Four, it was Jiang Qing, and he was young and ignorant, whatever. When pressed, he wouldn't take any moral responsibility. That's probably the way it was in Inner Mongolia. I've never yet met someone who said from the bottom of his heart that he was sorry.

As a small and weak ethnic group, our feelings are different from those of our rulers. Before I knew that Yuan Hongbing had written his book, I'd already heard of him, because in Beijing he made some appeals on behalf of farmers and workers. A friend said to me, hey, now our school has produced two people like this, you and Yuan Hongbing! I was very happy to hear about this; after all, since we're from the same school,

there's a feeling of closeness. Later when Yuan Hongbing went overseas, there was a report about his book and I spoke with him by phone. My feeling about his views is that, first, he represents a Chinese conscience, and as a Mongol, I'm very grateful to him. On the other hand, sometimes I feel a bit ashamed, because we have so many intellectuals—why doesn't one of them write a book like this?

Song Yongyi writes that the Cultural Revolution was the darkest and most tragic time for the Mongols, but he also says it was the Mongols' most humiliating time! Because the Mongols are descendants of Genghis Khan, and yet only a few were strong enough to refuse to inform on others. Most people, after being severely beaten, couldn't take any more and began to incriminate each other: wives exposing husbands, husbands selling out wives, relatives and friends informing on each other. In the end, they were all arrested and beaten.

Because of this, after the Cultural Revolution, there was still a lot of resentment among many families. Let's say I got someone arrested and he was then beaten to death—his wife and children would never forgive me. It wasn't that he was seeking glory by turning in a friend, but that he was beaten beyond endurance. They'd beat him until he informed on someone, but one was never enough. In the end, people would say that everyone they knew was in the IMPP. Deceit, that was the name of the game. From the Mongols' point of view, this is a knot that can never be undone. I mentioned earlier why we established the IMPP; it's a similar thing, because in the past we didn't protest and as a result you massacred us. We need to change this karma of being victims of massacre, where if you're in a good mood today, you won't kill us and we'll say you're good people, but then tomorrow or whenever, something happens and maybe you'll start killing us again. So why do we want independence? Because if we're not independent, we can't guarantee our survival.

One reason for this is China's "sea of humans" tactic. China has 1.3 billion people, and increasing numbers have come to Inner Mongolia. In our nomadic economy, the relationship between heaven and nature and humans was relatively harmonious, there was a kind of balance. But now they've destroyed that balance. They open up any land that can be farmed and then they crowd the Mongols out to some desert on the margins. Even places that aren't suitable for farming, they still want to squeeze into. As a nation, we're being deprived of our *lebensraum*. It's also making it impossible for us to preserve our culture, and there's a sense of cultural crisis. I read a book on Tibet by a French writer who said that China had planned in advance to murder its ancient culture. I think the Chinese are already doing this in Inner Mongolia. Of course you can claim your Mongolian identity in your residence papers, but you don't have any special national characteristics.

Chinese culture has this concept of "great unity." If you talk about splitting, about independence, the Chinese find it as hard to take as robbing their ancestors' graves. Even some who don't necessarily follow the CCP aren't willing to listen to such talk. Take Taiwan independence, for example. The fate of the 23 million Taiwanese people should be in the hands of the Taiwanese. Whether they want to preserve the Republic of China

or unite with the mainland should be up to them; I think no one has the right to interfere in this. If they want to be independent, let them be. If China threatens to attack, these are gangster tactics: if you don't do what I say, I'll slaughter you! This kind of hegemonic concept is so unreasonable.

Some people say, how will you get along once you're independent? I don't think we have to worry about that, do we? In some people's lives, material things are the most important, but people also need spirituality, individuality and dignity, and even here we see this concept of "great unity" imposed. The Communists have developed this into a kind of monstrous rule where people are pushed to extremes of evil. They use high-sounding slogans like "patriotism," or "for the people, for the nation," even though the CCP has itself brought the greatest calamity to both the people and the nation.

As for the problems China is having now, I think the Communist Party is the chief culprit. The *Nine Commentaries*⁷ clearly enumerates the evils of the CCP. People over 50 who are concerned about this period of history and politics may know all about the evil history of the CCP, but most young people nowadays know almost nothing about it. In Beijing now, they say elementary and middle school students don't even know about what happened in 1989. I think this is the main purpose of a book such as the *Nine Commentaries*.

How can we separate China from the Chinese Communists? The CCP now represents both the nation and the fundamental interests of the state. This is how it appears to the Mongols. And Mongols feel this is Han Chinese culture, this is the way Hans do things, because from our point of view, the Han people arrived with the CCP. This is a totalitarian communist tyranny, and from the perspective of ethnic groups, the CCP's oppressive rule over minorities has brought disaster. So our feelings on this might at times be rather different from those of the Han Chinese.

But I agree with the *Nine Commentaries* that the CCP has been the greatest destroyer of Chinese culture. Everyone nowadays sees the destruction that the Communist Party has wrought on the environment and cultural relics, but I think an even more important kind of destruction is its devastation of Chinese culture. In the past, Chinese culture valued the qualities of benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*) and trust (*xin*). Now there's no trust left between people. What have things come to? What holds this society together? What does the culture rely on? In the past, it was courtesy to the wise and respect for elders, respect for public opinion—these things permeated ancient Chinese culture—and there was filial piety, this was revered in Chinese culture too. But all this has been demolished. Not only that, but the spirits and hearts of our children, our future generations, are being destroyed. I think this might be an even more important aspect of the tragedy of China; the devastation wrought on China's children could be the destruction of China's future.

People our age are all familiar with the story of the White-haired Girl. We saw the movie when we were children, and we all cried over Xi'er's tragedy. I heard recently that after some Chinese children saw the movie, an eight-year-old girl asked why that Xi'er was so stupid, because if she'd gone with Huang Shiren she would have had food to eat and clothes to

wear, whereas going with that poor guy Da Chun'er, she'd only have a hard time. When I heard this, I thought it was a complete devastation of the future.

Morality has been destroyed by the CCP; this evil dictatorship turns people into devils. Even if we overthrow the Communist system, the evil it has created could have a very long-term impact, making China a hell on earth. The CCP can't escape the judgment of history. Emperor Qin Shihuang wanted to live and rule forever, but he didn't last even two generations, did he? The Communist Party has brought more than enough disaster to China and to the world, including the disaster it brought to us Inner Mongolians, so I think its end is inevitable. But until then, what will it do? It will do everything it can to cover up its crimes, however irrationally. It will use all the power it has at its disposal to poison people's minds, to deceive them and to deceive the world, just as it has done all along. Therefore, the question is, how can we make what we are doing more effective?

Translated by a friend of HRIC

This interview was aired in Chinese on New Tang Dynasty TV on June 17, 2006. The Chinese transcript is posted on the Web site of New Tang Dynasty Television, http://www.ntdtv.com/xtr/b5/2006/07/05/a_46425.html, and also at the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, http://www.smhric.org/Chino_157.htm and <http://www.smhric.org/Chino158.htm>.

NOTES

1. The Third International, also called the Comintern or the Communist International, was founded in Moscow in 1919 to coordinate the international communist movement. Officially disbanded in 1943, the Comintern was revived as the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) from 1947 to 1956.
2. Ulanhu or Ulan-Fu (1906–1988) was the founder of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.
3. Yuan Hongbing sought asylum in Australia on July 21, 2004, after learning that the authorities planned to arrest him for distributing CDs containing his work on persecution of dissidents and mistreatment of Mongolians and Tibetans. Yuan had been previously arrested and imprisoned in 1994, after which he was exiled to Guizhou Province. His book *Freedom at Sunset* depicts the genocide committed against the Mongol people by the CCP. It should be noted, in the context of this interview, that Yuan is generally identified as at least partly ethnic Mongolian. See the story excerpt and interview with Yuan elsewhere in this issue of CRF.
4. Former German chancellor Willy Brandt went to Warsaw in 1970 to visit the monument of the Warsaw Ghetto.
5. Kang Sheng (1898–1975) was one of the driving forces behind the Rectification Movement in 1942 and the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957. He is considered the creator of the Chinese gulag and the godfather of the Cultural Revolution.
6. Song Yongyi, ed., *Massacres During the Cultural Revolution (Wengue Da Tusha)*, Open Magazine Publishing (HK), 2002.
7. In December 2004, the *Epoch Times* published a book entitled *Nine Commentaries on the Chinese Communist Party*. The book consists of nine editorial essays that present a scathing historical analysis of the CCP. See <http://declaration.epochtimes.com/9comment.htm>.