

sow, its translucent bluish skin appearing ready to burst. Between his legs, his genitals hung like moldy cotton batting, dripping urine that sizzled in the caldron as it sparked and emitted a constant snickering sound. The stench of the urine wafted in the wind, but the steam it sent up from the caldron was pale blue, like an enchanting morning mist in spring.

A dozen peasants in ragged clothes covered by the caldron, their faces, weathered as the wind-pummeled alkaline soil, devoid of expression, as if they were beyond horror or sorrow; only their quaking bodies revealed the shriveled vestiges of instinct that had survived their ordeal.

A soldier led several educated youth<sup>1</sup> to stand before the peasants. The soldier's military uniform was dark green, like the skin of the toad emerging too early from hibernation. He frantically waved his short, stout, misshapen arms at the peasants as he yelled, "We've had the evidence a long time already. You're all members of the People's Revolutionary Party of Inner Mongolia that aims to split up our socialist homeland. This is your last chance to confess your crimes. All who refuse to confess will get a taste of the proletarian dictatorship from me. I will hang him over the caldron and roast him alive!"

"I'm a member of the People's Revolutionary Party of Inner

Mongolia. . . . You can call me whatever you like, just don't hang me . . ." A peasant knelt on the ground, his tearless sobs like crackling rust. The other peasants proceeded to kneel down one after another as the belly of the old man swelled even more and took on a strange crimson tincture like rouge on the face of a drowned and bloated corpse.

Yuan Hongbing observed the scene with eyes like rocks split by a sword. For all the tragedy he had seen, human misery still struck him to the heart. But what pained him now was not the wretched situation of the old man hung over the burning caldron, or the sobbing peasants kneeling on the ground, but rather the expression in the eyes of the soldier and the educated youth—their excited, agitated expressions as they looked on human misery like a tarantula crawling toward its prey. Yuan Hongbing felt desperate sorrow for the human eye transformed into that of a beast. He felt that even a sea of blood could not wash the beastly excitement and agitation from those eyes.

Suddenly, the air was rent with a long, terrifying shriek as the belly of the old man burst like an over-inflated balloon, and his agonized convulsions sent his entrails tumbling into the dark red caldron, producing plumes of acrid smoke. Through

## Excerpts from an interview with Yuan Hongbing

BY VOICE OF AMERICA

*After Yuan Hongbing obtained political asylum while on a trip to Australia in July 2004, three of his books were published overseas: *Elegy and Freedom at Sunset*, both of which relate the sufferings of Mongols under Chinese Communist rule, and *The Golden Holy Mountain*, about Tibet. Voice of America interviewed him on December 9, 2004.*

**Yuan:** *Freedom at Sunset* mainly focuses on the Cultural Revolution. Using the backdrop of the genocidal acts committed by the Chinese Communist authorities against Mongols at that time, this novel describes the psychology of the Mongols, their culture, art and spiritual aspirations. *Freedom at Sunset* is based on the tragic events I witnessed as a youth. At the time, I was deeply affected by the sufferings endured by many Mongols and their families, including young Mongols who grew up with me. For that reason, at the age of 19, I vowed to the earth and sky of Inner Mongolia that I would write about these tragic events. I hope to resurrect these beautiful, good, free and noble lives in my novel and give their souls a kind of immortality.

My second book, *Elegy*, is more autobiographical. It begins when I'm 12 years old and continues right through to 1996, after I was sent to Guizhou Province, and includes my observations of the democracy movement's struggles against tyranny in the 1980s.

**VOA:** These incidents of gross inhumanity also occurred among the Han majority. During the Cultural Revolution, it was not only Mongols and Tibetans that suffered massacres and other inhumane acts; Han people were also affected.

**Yuan:** Although people in the Han majority were also persecuted, it was different from the persecution of Mongols. There were many complicated reasons that Han Chinese were persecuted, including reasons related to free thought. But the persecution of Mongols and Tibetans, as expressed by the Communist Party, was meant to eradicate all traces of a culture that was incompatible with materialism and communist thought.

**VOA:** But some people might say, you have Mongolian blood, but you were able to become a member of the faculty of the Peking University School of Law. Doesn't that show that the Chinese government does all it can for talented Mongols like yourself?

**Yuan:** The books I write about the history and tragedy of Mongols have nothing to do with my personal ethnicity, but spring from my sense of conscience, in the same way that my other book, *The Golden Holy Mountain*, relating the suffering of the Tibetan people, has nothing to do with my personal ethnicity.

Translated by Stacy Mosher

The full Chinese interview can be read on the VOA Web site: <http://www.voanews.com/chinese/archive/2004-12/a-2004-12-09-20-1.cfm>.