

programs for secondary teacher preparation prior to 1945, although teacher preparation in state-run normal schools or teachers' colleges did persist alongside these university programs for years. Eventually all teacher education came under university auspices. The prominent proponent of the Enterprise approach to education was Donald Dickie, not Donald. Nevertheless, the editor and multiple authors of this text should be commended for their important documentation of the history of teacher education across the nation and for their invitation to join the conversation.

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Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness: Political Exile and Re-education in Mao's China

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During the famine that followed China's Great Leap Forward, hunger hit exiled intellectuals especially hard as they languished in re-education camps in remote corners of the country. In one such place, an imprisoned scholar encouraged his fellow inmates: "You must live. The higher-ups can't let us starve to death. If all of the country's scholars were to starve, the country itself would starve." Later he pleaded, "You definitely need to live, so the higher-ups can see the result of sending us here for Re-ed."¹ This particular quotation is fictional, spoken by a character in Yan Lianke's novel, *The Four Books*, but the words convey a tragic truth about the way China's flesh-and-blood scholars experienced their re-education. As Wang Ning's exceptional new monograph reveals, after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) banished intellectuals, many of them remained loyal to the government, optimistic about their future, and genuinely committed to re-educating themselves, even as their daily experience was marked by prolonged hunger, cruel treatment, and little appreciation, from higher-ups, for the inmates' efforts to reform. Wang's exploration of political exiles in Mao's China incorporates his exhaustive research into a truly beautiful narrative, full of individual voices, that is every bit as raw and moving as Yan's novel. The careful but deeply thoughtful readings of sources—recollections from captives, cadres, and guards, supplemented by official documents—makes *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness* indispensable reading for anyone who wants to understand the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Wang highlights the divergent experiences of Mao-era exiles through the case of intellectuals who were banished from Beijing to the Beidahuang borderlands. While he provides a solid overview of the categories of inmates, his central interest is the most famous among them: the so-called rightists. As he notes, the 1957 Anti-Rightist

1 Yan Lianke, *The Four Books*, trans. Carlos Rojas (New York: Grove Press, 2010), 237–8.

Campaign, and the ensuing imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of intellectuals, has long been a focus of academic attention, but the related literature collapses the political and intellectual identities of the accused, portraying them simplistically, and often wrongly, as dissident-victims who were punished for actively fighting the policies of the Communist Party-State and resisting its coercive efforts at ideological remoulding. Wang argues convincingly, however, that most rightists “were not necessarily real or even potential opponents of Mao’s government; rather, they were often ‘loyal dissidents’ and faithful followers of the CCP” (4). Many rightists were receptive to re-education, through which they hoped to redeem themselves in the eyes of the people and the state. And while they were certainly victims of political campaigns, “some of them were also victims of (and victimized) their fellow exiles” (4). While we tend to laud rightists as heroes who suffered for their convictions, Wang shows that the majority are better understood as “accidental dissidents” (23). Some advanced political opinions, but even the critics often expressed their support for Marxist ideology and Party rule. Many more had not engaged in any behaviour that we, or the Maoist state for that matter, would necessarily classify as dissent. Despite the rhetoric, Wang argues, the reason most people were imprisoned had less to do with political errors, as defined by the highest higher-ups, and far more to do with the personal agendas of the lower-level cadres and guards who carried out the practical work of accusing, trying, and incarcerating supposed offenders.

Reading recollections of trauma as historical sources is a difficult task. In a few places, the author takes his historical actors at their word when more skepticism might have been warranted, but overall Wang strikes a balance, letting his subjects speak for themselves while highlighting the way their own words reveal the complicated and unreliable character of their memories. In his exegesis of those memories, Wang makes a crucial contribution to the field of PRC history by modelling a new kind of analysis. There is a scholarly consensus that the idealistic propaganda of the Mao era did not always match concrete conditions, and a broader scholarly focus on exposing the crimes of communism to vitiate its rhetoric has created a fraught academic environment within which it is difficult to treat as genuine something like the state’s interest in rehabilitating its prisoners without seeming to pardon the Party for its excesses. Wang intervenes to show that we must recognize ideological remoulding as a real phenomenon and that, in fact, it was the very power of CCP ideology and re-education that made it so tormenting to its targets. Wang introduces us to Beijing intellectuals on the eve of their banishment, when they were optimistic, even excited, about the opportunity to study a promising ideology, re-evaluate their thinking, and learn to make positive contributions to a new society. Hungry to prove themselves and their worth, they were initially convinced that the higher-ups, too, had faith in the potential and importance of China’s scholars. We witness the developing confusion, as the internees attempted to make sense of a dawning realization — the Chinese state might be willing to let them starve; Whether or not the highest higher-ups trusted intellectuals to remake themselves and rejoin society, the (lower) higher-ups in their individual camps cared little, no matter how hard inmates worked toward their own redemption. We feel their growing dismay as the protagonists began to suspect that

the new state and its ideology, which they had often supported, might not value intellectuals at all.

The tragedy, then, is that the exiles themselves took the rhetoric of the state far more seriously than the state did. By the end of the book, it is clear that many of the scholars, quite undeniably, underwent a profound transformation during their incarceration and re-education. As Wu Yongliang recalled, after several years in a camp, “I felt my mind was empty—no fear, no sorrow, not even resentment . . . freedom, dignity, personality, and taste . . . seemed entirely missing. This is probably the ideal state of ‘thorough reconfiguration of oneself’ (*toutai huanghu*)” (157).

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