

*A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3: The Storm Clouds Descend, 1955–1957.*

By MELVYN C. GOLDSTEIN. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. xli, 547 pp. \$75.00 (cloth).

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*The Storm Clouds Descend*, the third volume in Melvyn Goldstein's monumental series, *The History of Modern Tibet*, begins in 1955 during a period of "guarded optimism" (p. 467), the young Fourteenth Dali Lama having just returned to Lhasa from an extended stay in Eastern China. It ends barely two years later with the Dalai Lama again returning to Lhasa, this time from India, the Communist Party's policies toward Tibet now at a precipice. In between, Goldstein tells a remarkably detailed and at times riveting story that winds from Central Tibet to Beijing, through Kham and Kalimpong, Delhi and Bhutan. His self-described goal is "to examine the complex centripetal and centrifugal forces at play as diverse actors sought to control the flow of events in accordance with very different ideologies, tactics, and strategies" (p. xv). In this effort, Goldstein draws on a body of source material unprecedented in both its scope and depth. The results are impressive, producing a narrative that is tethered to neither Lhasa nor Beijing, but instead moves along multiple horizontal and vertical axes while offering degrees of complexity, insight, and thoroughness that outstrip previous literature on Tibet in the 1950s.

Goldstein credits "Mao [Zedong's] nuanced and pragmatic Tibet policy" (p. 34) with creating an atmosphere of mutual moderation that by 1955 had caused the Dalai Lama to conclude "that maintaining Buddhism (i.e. monasticism) was compatible with modernizing Tibet as part of the PRC" (p. 33). At its core was a "gradualist strategy" that "prioritized pragmatism over ideology and stipulated that work should proceed slowly and cautiously with respect to making changes to the traditional society" (p. 5). However, the United Front, as it is otherwise known, was quickly undermined by hardliners on both sides. Among Tibetans, the dissenters included a monastic clique centered around the Dalai Lama's powerful lord chamberlain, an exile group in India known informally as *Jenkhentsisum*, and anti-Chinese activists in Central Tibet and Kham. Employing oral histories conducted with several of the principle actors, the diary and papers of the important Tibetan lay aristocrat Shakabpa, and foreign service archives, Goldstein describes with a new level of detail the tactical, social, and personal tensions that inhibited a unified response to the Chinese threat. Yet, fearing that the Dalai Lama would concede to a framework for the formal administrative inclusion of Central Tibet into the People's Republic, these disparate actors colluded on a plan to convince the Dalai Lama to travel to India for the celebration of the Buddha's birth, where they hoped, unsuccessfully as it would turn out, he could be persuaded to remain in exile.

Yet, it is Goldstein's treatment of the Chinese state's side of the equation that sets this book apart from its few predecessors. Marshaling rare documentation, including unpublished manuscripts from the author's own collection as well as extensive interviews with Chinese and Tibetan participants, Goldstein chronicles for the first time the policy divisions and personal rivalries within the Communist Party that helped sabotage Mao's strategy of "gradualism" in Kham and threatened to do the same in Central Tibet. This includes the most detailed scholarly examination yet of the causes and course of the Kham uprising, as well as 1956's "Great Expansion," an effort by Fan Ming, acting head of the Tibet Work Committee, to introduce socialist reforms to Central Tibet against Beijing's express orders. By 1957, Goldstein concludes, "[t]he success Mao had

achieved in winning over the Dalai Lama during his 1954-1955 visit to inland China was now in shambles . . ." (p. 467), thus setting the stage for the final volume in the series.

Conducted decades after the contested events they recount, Goldstein's interviews are at once his most engaging sources and those that might give readers most cause for concern, such as when the subject of a 2003 interview directly quotes a companion's words uttered in 1955. Nonetheless, these reservations are mitigated by Goldstein's efforts when possible to corroborate his interviews with other sources, as well as the extraordinary richness they provide. At times, this includes a surprising willingness on the part of his subjects to challenge both current Chinese state and Tibetan exile narratives of the 1950s, including a spirited defense of actions that led to the rebellion in Kham by Fan Zhizhong, the former Party Secretary of Ganzi Prefecture (ex. p. 226).

In all, *The Storm Clouds Descend* is a tremendous addition to a series that for some time is likely to remain the defining statement on the modern political history of Central Tibet. Additionally, Goldstein provides scholars of the period a great service by including extensive transcripts from his own interviews and in several cases the full texts of otherwise unavailable documents. Those of us who teach the subject can only hope that when Professor Goldstein finishes his final volume, he might consider a more concise version weighted toward undergraduates and the general public.

BENNO RYAN WEINER  
*Appalachian State University*  
weinerbr@appstate.edu