

Using Hong Xiuquan's life to explore the Taiping Rebellion, Spence draws implicit parallels to more recent events. The record of infighting and Hong's assumption of imperial prerogatives (including sexual ones, denied on religious grounds to his followers) are reminiscent of Mao Zedong. Spence's insights into Hong's theology also conjure up thoughts of David Koresh and Shoko Asahara. Yet it is a measure of Spence's accomplishment that his account of this frightening, fascinating crusade is fresher than last week's headlines.

—Benjamin L. Self

**KEEPING TOGETHER IN TIME:
*Dance and Drill in Human History.***

By William H. McNeill.

Harvard Univ. Press. 198 pp. \$22

The emergence, development, and maintenance of human society has been significantly shaped by "keeping together in time," that is, by coordinating people's bodily movements in such activities as collective labor, social and ritual dancing, and military drill.

So proposes McNeill, professor emeritus of history at the University of Chicago. In this intriguing if highly speculative book, he argues that human community emerges "whenever an indefinite number of individuals start to move their muscles rhythmically, establish a regular beat, and continue doing so for long enough to arouse euphoric excitement shared by all participants." The effects of this "muscular bonding" have been far-ranging, from generating cooperation among prehistoric human beings to creating group cohesion among soldiers in battle.

Like a dancer doing a warm-up number before finding his feet, McNeill starts weak before gaining strength. Discussing evolution, he extrapolates an ambitious theory from skimpy fossil evidence and inconclusive behavioral studies of wild chimpanzees. It is entirely plausible that when bands of *Homo erectus* learned to "get together in time," they fostered emotional bonds that in turn facilitated the hunting and sharing of food. But this kind of deductive gyration is trickier to perform than the Flying Lindy. Even McNeill acknowledges that his caveman hypothesis "lacks learned support."

McNeill is on firmer ground when he notes that in primitive communities, rhythmic movements are used to make work more

efficient and bearable, and to make dance a conduit for shared religious ecstasy.

The same was true in ancient times, McNeill argues. The early Hebrew prophets "danced and sang to induce divine frenzy"; Saul and David "danced before the Lord"; and the early Christians "understood that departed Christian souls joined the angels in a perpetual dance around the throne of God." Islam, too, has its ecstatic tradition of whirling dervishes, and it expects all believers to make the same prayer movements five times a day.

Building upon a personal reminiscence of drilling as a recruit in World War II, McNeill explores how the ties forged in close-order drill helped the armies of ancient times, whether Chinese or Greek, fight more effectively. Drill's role in actual fighting became less decisive as weaponry became more powerful. But even after the Industrial Revolution, it retained a vital role in bolstering solidarity—as was evident among the precision-drilled troops of Nazi Germany.

McNeill ends with the claim that "repugnance against Hitlerism" has led to a widespread and persistent "distrust" of muscular bonding in the West. But this claim is instantly undermined by the fact that a very different kind of muscular bonding—swing dancing—was extraordinarily popular during the war. Indeed, *Keeping Together in Time* would be a better book if it considered that, for the generation that defeated Hitler, the vigorous movements associated with swing provided a liberating counterpart to the Nazi goose step. As recalled by the Czech writer (and former swing musician) Josef Skvorecky: "Our sweet, wild music . . . was a sharp thorn in the sides of the power-hungry men."

—Mark Gauvreau Judge

**INTIMACY AND TERROR:
*Soviet Diaries of the 1930s.***

Edited by Véronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen.
New Press. 394 pp. \$27.50

Can a totalitarian regime forcibly deprive human beings of their memory? Not without bizarre consequences. Or so it would appear from this impressive collection of personal diaries written in the Soviet Union during the harshest years of Joseph Stalin's rule.