

and thus of having contributed to further understanding of the Republican era.

BRUNHILD STAIGER

*Resa i Tibet.* By CHRISTER LEOPOLD. [Stockholm: PA Norstedt & Sönersförlag, 1980. 244 pp.]

This is an account of a visit, in August 1977, to the Lhasa and Shigatse areas in Tibet. It closely conforms to the well-known pattern of “friendly” reports from pre-Deng China. The only difference is that the watershed between “old” and “new” is taken to be 1959 (the year of “democratic reforms”) rather than 1949. Tibet moreover has few industries, the agriculture is very backward and the cultural life has long been severely curtailed. The author, therefore, dutifully devotes more attention to the “evils” of the old society than to the “happiness” of the new life. A considerable part of the book is taken up by interviews. The interviewees fall into four major categories – a Chinese Tibetologist, Tibetan cadre families, members of the former ruling class and, last but not least, Panchen Lama.

The Tibetologist, not surprisingly, mostly elaborates on the close relationship, throughout the centuries, between China and Tibet and presents the (then) official version of modern Tibetan history.

The cadre family members to be interviewed were selected from among former serfs and slaves. They are very clearly, both in terms of social status and living standards, the beneficiaries of the “democratic reforms.” Consequently their stories of past grievances and praise of the changes since 1959 have a somewhat genuine ring.

The nobles and monks have interesting things to say only about the pre-1959 period and matters strictly related to their daily chores. On the whole they give a submissive and meek impression as if they had just arrived from a struggle-meeting. The author uncritically accepts their tale of total and successful integration.

The interview with Panchen Lama is quite different. This influential Buddhist leader, unlike Dalai Lama, remained in China and Tibet after the abortive uprising in 1959. On the eve of the “Cultural Revolution,” however, he was relieved of his functions and put under house-arrest outside Tibet. The author was allowed to meet him for an interview in 1979. Panchen Lama, then (year two anno Deng Xiaoping) on his way back to political prominence, expresses quite severe criticism of intolerance, during the “Cultural Revolution,” towards Buddhism and Tibetan customs. Nevertheless, there is nothing strikingly different in what he says from what one could read, at the time, in the official Chinese press. The author who (judging from the book) had never before met a Tibetan daring to express even a modicum of critical views fails to realize the limitation of this “frankness” and extols it out of proportion. A year later (in 1980) when many more aspects of the “reforms” in Tibet were being criticized Panchen Lama would most likely have presented an enhanced version of “frankness” including for example the grave crisis in Tibetan agriculture and education.

In a postscript written in May 1980 the author does seem worried about the drastic re-evaluations of the Maoist era. He had better be since the picture of great harmony and happiness that dominates his account is no longer supported in the Chinese press. Unfortunately the conclusion he

draws from this seems to be to tread carefully and avoid elaborations in case the re-evaluations should be re-evaluated.

In addition to the interviews discussed above the book contains a few chapters about the major monasteries and religious monuments in the visited areas. These chapters are of no particular interest except possibly to tourists. That is also the case with the author's short description of the Tibetan geography and climate.

To be written by somebody who has "for more than ten years carried out research on Tibet" and is furthermore an "authority on China" it is a surprisingly naïve and weak book. Maybe that is the price one had to pay to be the second Swede (Sven Hedin – in 1907 – being the first) to set one's foot on Tibetan soil.

LARS RAGVALD

*The Cartoonist Feng Zikai.* By CHRISTOPH HARBSMEIER. [Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1984. 215 pp. £18.95.]

As an anthology of the cartoons of Feng Zikai (1898–75), the name with whom the term *manhua* (cartoon) came to be associated in China, this work differs from numerous other anthologies of Feng's work printed in China and Hong Kong in that most of the cartoons are accompanied by the author's own reactions to the drawings. The author humbly denies any claim to be authoritative and declines to make theoretical generalizations, but in general, his comments range from helpful to occasionally complementing the humour shown in the captions. For example, the cartoon of a cat releasing a rat from a cage has the caption "Liberation." The author comments, "Even cats release mice from human traps in Feng's utopia. Cats, of course, never do this sort of thing. It would be absurd for a cat to do this. Paradoxical. But on the cat's face one can see that this is an enlightened cat" (p. 117).

In an essay written in 1947 on his cartoons, Feng looks back on his 20 plus years of cartoon drawing and roughly divides his career into four periods; that of illustrating lines from classical poetry, and those on children, society and on nature. Feng notes that these are not strict boundaries, but that they mark four main themes in his work. (Feng Zikai, *Yuanyuantang suibiji*, Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, Hangzhou 1983, p. 310). This anthology presents Feng's work under somewhat different categories, including those of a romantic nature, children's portraits, Buddhist cartoons, those on various social themes, and concludes with a section of works under communism. The first four sections also overlap chronologically.

In the introduction, the author states that "Feng Zikai was the founder and the unequalled master of the Chinese lyrical cartoon" (p. 9), the lyricism referring to "the unmediated artistic frankness that had its deep roots in philosophical Buddhism" (p. 10). One direct link with lyricism, however, is the group of cartoons illustrating lines from classical poetry. Examples in this anthology are mainly in the first section, but as the author notes, his "more traditional works deserve an anthology to themselves" (p. 177). While these works capture in pictorial form the moment presented in well-known lines from the great Tang and Song poets, others strike a chord in readers of Feng's informal essays. For example, in the cartoon of a soldier playing the *erhu* musical instrument