

and in the "cultural revolution". Equalization measures, lack of educational institutions or misrepresentation in the political administration etc. undermined the cultural identity of the minorities. Since 1980, starting with a change in the policy towards Tibet, the general situation was improved by measures taken in the fields of autonomy, economy, education, etc., the author says. It is maintained in the conclusion that in the last some thirty years basic improvements were carried out apart from the times of oppression and forced assimilation which created an atmosphere of mistrust.

Part two describes ethnology in China as a young academic discipline, influenced by European and American scientists, e.g. B. Malinowski. Before 1949 Chinese students went abroad and foreign scholars did field research in China but were excluded thereafter. Ethnology had to fulfill different tasks in different periods, again correlated with the political movements. This created quite a few obstacles to research and development of this science. After 1949 it was engaged in research to classify the various ethnic groups, on which their status of autonomy, for example, depended. Since 1956, research and publications increased in number, but "for ten years there was no ethnological research" during the cultural revolution (p.64). It only revived and became one of the sciences promoted in China thereafter, especially since 1978. Many projects are planned, new societies established and theoretical discussions are flourishing. This section of part two (pp. 64-76) is valuable for a deeper knowledge of the status quo of Chinese ethnology. Many questions are still awaiting an answer like the de facto situation in periods of differing policy, but we are provided with information and insights which are helpful for further studies. Heberer cites from Chinese sources difficult to obtain, so the reader may find the bibliography valuable as well.

Günter Bittner

RUDOLF G. WAGNER (ed.): *Literatur und Politik in der Volksrepublik China*. (Edition Suhrkamp 1151). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983. 376 pages. DM 18.-

This book introduces some of the most popular literary works of post-1978 China. The collection comprises short stories, a play and a poem, written by established writers like Wang Meng as well as by young authors such as Zheng Yi and Li Shoucheng.

The topics all stories have in common are the critique of bureaucratism, the unscrupulous abuse of privileges by cadres who were rehabilitated after the fall of the "Gang of Four" and personal unhappiness, stemming from the Cultural Revolution.

These works belong to the "Wounds"-literature named after a story that

was published in 1978.

The editor of this book, Rudolf G. Wagner, was a lecturer at Berlin Free University before he went to the USA. His contributions to the study of modern Chinese literature as well as his studies in Chinese history have left a distinct mark on German Sinology. Traditionally, literature has always had the function of political criticism in China. The situation did not change after 1949, since Mao had drawn rigid guidelines for the writers in his speech "About Art and Literature" made in Yanan, 1942.

For this reason literature is always taken for a veiled political statement rather than a work of art. Moreover, literature serves as a medium for the discussion of topics which could otherwise hardly be debated among the readers. Also, it enables the leaders to get some feed-back on the popularity of their political line.

Some of the stories in the book are not of a very high literary standard, nevertheless they caused great excitement among the reading public and the officials as well, because of their openness and frank description of common grievances.

The editor has done an excellent job in presenting the reader with a clear and concise description of the background and origin of each piece, for example the real story behind the play "What if I really was?" and the steps that led to its being banned. It is thanks to his efforts that the reader will be able to follow the literary and political development reflected in the stories, as seen in Wang Meng's story "The grateful heart", when the old hairdresser describes the political career of his friend, the former prisoner and now powerful party secretary who enjoys many privileges and has lost touch with the common people. Thus, even an uninformed reader will be able to catch some of the significance attached to the stories. Wagner's comments are very helpful. However, I must say that the style of translation does not make reading a pleasure. The editor argues that "it was necessary to translate very close to the original, to preserve its strangeness" (p.11).

His intention is not to give a comprehensive interpretation of each work, but to leave the accomplishment of this task to others.

In presenting some of the most daring and courageous pieces of literature to be found in the post-Cultural Revolution period he achieves an extraordinary synthesis of political background information and a general view of the function of literary work in modern China. I think this book will be well received by German readers with an interest in Chinese politics and literature.

Elisabeth Rickens