

Social Science in China

Sociology and Anthropology in the People's Republic of China. Report of a Delegation Visit, February–March 1984. ALICE S. ROSSI, Ed. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1985. x, 161 pp. Paper, \$3.

In China from the mid-1950's until after the death of Mao Zedong sociology and social anthropology were condemned for being bourgeois disciplines and banished from the academic curriculum, while some of China's most distinguished practitioners of these disciplines were humiliated and silenced. The destruction of these scholarly disciplines was especially tragic in view of the distinction they had attained before their fall. "It could be argued," wrote the distinguished British social anthropologist Maurice Freedman in the 1960's, "that before the Second World War, outside North America and Western Europe, China was the seat of the most flourishing sociology in the world, at least in respect of its intellectual quality."

Happily, beginning around five years ago, sociology and anthropology have started to make a comeback in China. In this unusually informative report of a delegation of ten American sociologists and anthropologists who visited China in 1984, the first steps of Chinese sociology and anthropology toward recovery are described in detail.

Sociology is in a better position than anthropology. The decisive event in the rebirth of sociology was the establishment, in 1979, of an Institute of Sociology in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This institute provides the main direction and resources for the development of sociology throughout the nation. Professional associations, tied closely to the Institute of Sociology, extend throughout the various regions of China, providing a framework for the development of the discipline. Five Chinese universities now have functioning departments of sociology, and there are fledgling programs in research and instruction at four others.

Leading the reestablishment of sociology is a cohort of elderly scholars, who had established their professional reputations by the early 1950's only to have their careers stifled for the rest of the Maoist era. Under them is a younger

generation of apprentice scholars. The delegation of American scholars who visited in 1984 express concern in their report about the consequences of the lack of a middle-aged generation in Chinese sociology.

The Americans also express concern about the narrow focus of sociological research in China. Its legitimacy still vulnerable, its research still deeply shaped by government supervision, Chinese sociology mainly concerns itself with "applied research," gathering information about specific "social problems" affecting family life (such as intergenerational conflicts, increasing divorce rates, or the difficulties of mate selection), public security (such as juvenile delinquency), or economic development (such as the effects of migration of peasants to cities and towns). There has not yet been much work done on placing the information gathered on such problems into a wider theoretical context. That presumably could lead the research to touch on politically sensitive issues that would make sociology threatening to the government—and make the government threatening to sociologists. Still, the American visitors express excitement about some of the data being gathered by Chinese sociologists and admiration for the high caliber of students being trained. One senses in their report some hope that Chinese sociology will gradually be able to increase its theoretical sophistication.

Anthropology, the authors report, is less well developed in China than sociology. They concern themselves mainly with social anthropology and conclude that the professional situation of this discipline is "limited if not defensive." Anthropology is mainly carried out within research institutes devoted to studying the national minorities of China. Although anthropologists working in these institutes carefully gather a rich assortment of data descriptive of the ways of life of these minorities, they squeeze their data into the straitjacket of the 19th-century evolutionary theory of Lewis Henry Morgan, whose work was celebrated by Marx and popularized by Engels. In line with this theory, China's national minorities are defined as examples of primitive stages in the historical development, while the dominant Han

nationality is seen as the modern culmination of historical evolution.

The members of the American delegation to China seem to have written their report at least as much for their Chinese colleagues as for their fellow Americans. In the report, they seek to correct certain Chinese misunderstandings about American social life, they tactfully encourage a broadening of theoretical focus for Chinese sociology and anthropology, and they suggest ways for improving the rigor of research methodology. Their advice on the whole seems to exemplify American mainstream thinking in their disciplines. But both sociology and anthropology in this country are fractious, pluralistic disciplines that seemingly suffer from chronic "paradigm crises." There are many articulate voices in both disciplines who would argue that the mainstreams are not very deep and are not going anywhere worthwhile. Though in some ways disconcerting, these internecine debates have generated a considerable amount of intellectual creativity. I would have preferred that the Chinese sociologists had been introduced a little more to the backstage messiness of American sociology. Perhaps that will come when, as a result of some of the admirable academic exchange agreements proposed by the scholars visiting from America, there will be a welcome increase in two-way intellectual traffic across the Pacific.

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Avoiding Nuclear War

Hawks, Doves, and Owls. An Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War. GRAHAM T. ALLISON, ALBERT CARNESALE, and JOSEPH S. NYE, JR., Eds. Norton, New York, 1985. xii, 282 pp. \$14.95.

Preventing Nuclear War. A Realistic Approach. BARRY M. BLECHMAN, Ed. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1985. x, 197 pp. \$22.50; paper, \$9.95.

Neither of the two books reviewed here really accepts the opinion current today that the danger of nuclear war has been increasing and that some drastically new approaches are needed. Contemplating all of what has been written on the nuclear issue since the 1950's, the book edited by Allison, Carnesale, and Nye offers the most plausible, detailed, and specific cases possible concerning the likelihood of nuclear war as well as introductory and concluding chapters