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

that contain some altogether sensible advice, most of which amounts to a rejection of serious departures from past approaches. What is new and concrete in the book thus amounts to careful statements of the case for pessimism. As compared with this pessimism, the introductory and concluding chapters by the editors contain not so much a mid-course correction as a dismissal of most proposals for changes of course.

Richard K. Betts and Paul Bracken offer succinct versions of the cases they have developed elsewhere. Can we be sure of avoiding an enemy's surprise attack without running the risk of responding too violently to false alarms? Fen Osler Hampson and Francis Fukuyama offer detailed summaries of the threats posed by the European Central Front and the countries of the Middle East. One hopes that the abundance of oil has decreased the tensions and risks in the Middle East, but worries about the area remain plausible enough. The risk of nuclear escalation in South Korea gets somewhat less coverage in the book. Stephen Meyer offers a well-researched overview of Soviet views on nuclear escalation, although it is hardly clear that the debates about what the Soviets expect and believe can ever be finally resolved by what they say, or by what else we can monitor.

The Blechman collection differs in that, with the exception of a chapter by Joseph Nye that reads almost like a shorter version of the chapters by the editors in the Allison, Carnesale, and Nye book, its chapters are not addressed to general points of view but to specifics and in that these chapters are optimistic rather than pessimistic.

Taking the view that the current nuclear confrontation is not going to be eliminated, the authors outline the track record to date and offer some never overstated, interestingly and imaginatively described mid-term steps that might well reduce the risks of nuclear warfare. William Lynn's historical survey of United States-Soviet confidence-building measures, such as the ABM Treaty and SALT I and II, is complemented well by Richard Betts's proposal for a Joint Nuclear Risk Control Center. Sidney Drell and Theodore Ralston make a convincing case that much might yet be gained from various kinds of bans on weapons testing (if only we could have arranged a ban on MIRV testing!). Blechman presents some interesting new ideas on containing the threat of nuclear terrorism, and Victor Utgoff does the same with respect to automated monitoring as a means of keeping the United States and the Soviet Union informed of each other's deployments and moves.

The two books go together nicely as a package for anyone who wants to set out on the subject of nuclear deterrence and for anyone who has gotten caught up too much in a predominately dovish or hawkish enthusiasm for new ways out of our dilemma. Someone who had already read a fair amount of the mainstream literature on nuclear issues might find the devil's advocate cases in *Hawks, Doves, and Owls* new and interesting, but would mainly find himself or herself reassured by the book that the world has indeed not changed beyond recognition since 1950. The same reader would find the drift of the Blechman book quite congenial and would uncover a number of new nuggets in the book's practical proposals.

What are hardest to find in most of the many books that are now appearing on the subject of nuclear war are some really Pareto-optimal improvements, moves to reduce the likelihood of nuclear war without increasing too much the chances of war in general and moves to reduce the tensions on one front without increasing them on another. A reader should be warned that most of the "improvements" and "ways out" offered in the literature on nuclear war may be illusory. That having been said, the Blechman collection offers a plausible list of new ideas that might actually be good ideas.

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Plant Cytology

Plant Membranes. Endo- and Plasma Membranes of Plant Cells. DAVID G. ROBINSON. Wiley-Interscience, New York, 1985. xx, 331 pp., illus. $69.50. Cell Biology.

Twenty years ago we lacked mechanistic and functional information about plant membranes, and it was generally thought that such membranes were synthesized and functioned in ways similar to those known for their animal counterparts. Since 1965, our understanding of the biogenesis and activities of plant membranes has advanced tremendously, and Robinson has succeeded in bringing these advances together in a lucid and timely volume. In order to maintain focus and to provide a book of reasonable length, he does not include treatments of plastid or mitochondrial membranes, which have received a great deal of attention elsewhere. He provides just the right amount of historical perspective and builds upon considerations of ultrastructure to develop a most readable, knowledgeable, and impressive account of the biochemical, cellular, and molecular characteristics and functions of plant membrane systems.

Robinson begins the volume with detailed descriptions of the individual membrane systems. These descriptions are current and well documented, though they often become a bit encyclopedic. Greater use of summary tables would have been an aid to those outside the field. For such readers, the author relies too heavily upon the use of abbreviations, which can readily lead to confusion even for knowledgeable readers. An outstanding feature of the section is an evaluative presentation of methods of isolation and characterization of the respective membrane fractions. Too frequently in discussions of the subject this kind of treatment is not included or is so highly abbreviated that it is of little value to researchers outside the field.

The second section of the volume is devoted to functional aspects of plant membranes. The treatment of such topics as the synthesis and secretion of extracellular macromolecules, the mobilization and synthesis of storage products, and recognition phenomena (for example, graviperception, light quality perception, and auxin transport and reception) is excellent. The subjects, which are broad and complex, are elegantly dealt with in a way that provides the essentials without obscuring the main points of the discussion with too many details or specific examples. Robinson integrates the varied literature on these topics into timely and thought-provoking mechanistic presentations.

The final section of the book examines the biogenesis and turnover of membranes. In this section Robinson wisely uses a case study format, which allows him to draw from specific well-studied animal systems to develop a context for the discussion of the comparatively poorly studied analogous plant systems. He states, "One must realize that biochemically we are still in the Dark Ages when it comes to understanding the biogenesis of plant endo and plasma membranes." His basic premise in this section is that it is likely that plant and animal cells have common mechanisms for membrane synthesis and degradation but vary in the proportions in which they