

Diskussionsleiter Prof. B. Lewin mit Prof. H.A. Dettmer, Prof. J. Kreiner, Prof. W. Naumann, Prof. E. May, Prof. S.-J. Park, Prof. R. Schneider, Prof. G.S. Dombrady
gegen 13.00 Abschluß der Tagung

"China in Transition"

Eighty-seventh Annual Meeting of The American Academy
of Political and Social Science. April 27 and 28, 1984
in Philadelphia

The American Academy of Political and Social Science was founded in 1889 and its publication "The Annals" is published since 1890. The venerable institution shows no signs of aging, but on the contrary is vital and active. The Annual Meetings follow a well tried and approved pattern: one year a domestic topic, next year an international one. The selection of topics is not only skillfully done and brilliantly executed during the Annual Meetings, they also give eloquent testimony to the great deal of apprehension, insight and sensibility which the Academy has cultivated.

The People's Republic of China was on the agenda in 1951, 1959, 1963, 1970, and 1972. The Academy's treatment of the subject therefore has tradition. It was always treated carefully, thoroughly and was looked upon from many different angles. A prudent retrospective view was applied as well as educated guesses pronounced about possible future developments based upon a solid examination of the respective present situation. The years when China was made topical at Annual Meetings were significant landmarks in that country's recent history. These events, in turn, induced new assessments and evaluations of China's role in world politics. In the U.S.A. the perception of China's conduct changed and accordingly Peking's usefulness or disturbing capabilities for Washington's intentions were re-examined. Thus, in 1970 and 1972 changing attitudes were carefully scrutinized that made the Kissinger/Nixon visits possible as well as consequences and opportunities that derived thereof.

After a brief period of euphoria in the 1970s (primarily on the American side) and much wishful thinking as well as misunderstanding und misinterpreting of one another's intentions and capabilities Sino-American relations in 1984

seem to be based more on a cost-benefit analysis, an agreement to disagree on substantial matters, but likewise on the conviction that cooperation nevertheless is of mutual benefit. The 1984 Annual Meeting coincided precisely with Ronald Reagan's visit to China.

The organizers of the Meeting had brought together ten speakers with distinguished credentials and achievements in their academic work. They came from different disciplines as well as from diverse political viewpoints within the established U.S.-American spectrum. The combination of these speakers, the most carefully selected topics for papers, and their fine tuning to each other were the main reasons that secured the success of the conference.

The Annual Meeting was divided into three sessions, each chaired by officers from the Academy, who did much to bring about the appropriate atmosphere, first of all the Academy's president Marvin E. Wolfgang in his amiable and diplomatic way.

Kenneth Lieberthal started with a net assessment of China's political reforms and concluded that despite significant changes in China individuals are still more important than institutions. Hong Yung Lee concentrated on bureaucratic reforms and new criteria for selection and promotion which quite often appear to be a combination of the Soviet Union's nomenklatura and the very special Chinese method to groom one's own successors; all together leading to "more sweeping changes than brought about by mass mobilization during the Cultural Revolution."

In the session on foreign relations Allen S. Whiting gave a very informative and balanced presentation of the Soviet Union's position, perceptions and interests. Parris H. Chang trailed the twisted route of U.S.-China relations: "from hostility to euphoria to realism." Describing and analyzing his subject he did not only draw from written sources but could nourish from a very special experience, as some time ago he was received by Hu Yaobang for an encounter at Zhong Nan Hai in the formerly Forbidden City.

Pi-Chao Chen then spoke on population policies after the late 1970s, their problems and results and stressed the immense differences between urban areas and countryside. Lee-Jay Cho explained the slight increase in the birth rate in the early 1980s with the introduction of the responsibility system in agriculture and the new marriage law which partly lifted former restrictions. Sidney Goldstein combined questions of birth rate with aspects of population distribution, labor force absorption, urbanization and migration problems, identifying fertility and migration control as the key or one of the major keys for China's modernization.

Vivienne Shu gave a detailed account of the new course in agriculture with its contract system and "specialized households" which do no collective work at all but engage in construction work, machine repair, etc. and hire own workers. She analyzed positive aspects as well as social consequences and disadvantages, e.g. women may be again exposed to male dominated hierarchy and girls are likely to drop out of school earlier. In some places rural school and medical systems are on the decline already.

Randle Edwards presented recent developments in China's legal system in a historical framework and explained the traditional attitude towards law and the conflicting relationship between "rule of man" and "rule of law" which is a main characteristic. To demonstrate the quantitative aspects he mentioned impressive figures for law students (12.000), lawyers (15.000), law schools (35) and law journals (23) from early 1984; impressive in comparison to the times of the "Cultural Revolution."

Focussing on China's industry in transition, Andrew Walder concluded that there were all the time growth rates except for periods of political intervention. However, since the 1950s capital productivity and overall improvement (efficiency) had not risen. It was more the price structure, inflation, etc. that brought about changes. Basic problems are still there and imperative seems to be an abolition of the centralized fiscal system.

As detailed as some information was, the presentations taken together provided a rather comprehensive picture of Chinese politics. A very positive impression was, that while each of the papers was self-contained they nevertheless were supplementary to each other. Another aspect which contributed to the success of this Annual Meeting was the composition of the participants which quite often is unique to such undertakings in the U.S.A. The audience included academic people, businessmen, journalists, officials from embassies and other diplomatic missions and delegates from various governmental and non-governmental institutions. This composition provided excellent opportunities for the exchange of information and views.

A book exhibition was an additional feature of a most rewarding conference whose proceedings will be published in "The Annals". To read them is hereby strongly recommended.

Werner Pfennig, Berlin