

CHINESE MARXIST SOCIOLOGY:  
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE TRENDS<sup>+</sup>

Barbara P. Hazard

I. INTRODUCTION

After a break of almost three decades since its prohibition in 1950, Chinese sociology has to do more than simply train personnel and catch up on international developments. As the Director of the Department of International Politics at Beida University and former sociologist trained under the Republic, Lei Jieqiong, at an address welcoming incoming sociology students stated,

"...our task is not merely to reinstate sociology; rather, we must found a sociology of New China. In name, it is a reinstatement, (but) in actual content, we must found (a new sociology). We are a socialist country. We must use the standpoint, perspective and method of Marxism-Leninism to study Chinese society..."<sup>1</sup>

Publications since the reinstatement of sociology indicate that this task is indeed taking up considerable intellectual effort. Many are solely concerned with discussing the specific meaning of 'Marxist' sociology and the desirable direction of development for Chinese Marxist sociology. Articles in the latter category cover a wide spectrum ranging from the broader questions of the appropriate role and theoretical basis for Chinese sociology during the current phase of socialist construction, to the more concrete questions of its correct methods and subject matter.

Finding a solution to these questions which is acceptable to both the intellectual community and to the political leadership is crucial not only for the future survival of sociology in China, but also for its future direction. A sociology which serves the mere legitimation of policy will look far different from one which preserves a degree of critical distance, and the political implications of this difference need hardly be mentioned. Although no final word can yet be made after only two and a half years of renewed engagement with sociology, still a certain direction of movement towards a particular brand of Marxist sociology is discernible in sociological publications, in the sociology curric-

ulum and in the behavior and attitudes of some of the first young sociology trainees.

In the following pages, I would like to describe some of my own observations made during a seven-week stay at Nankai University, Tianjin, as a visiting lecturer of sociology from November 1981 to January 1982. The forty-three students and twenty advanced trainees gathered at Nankai were participating in a one-time one-year intensive undergraduate program in sociology beginning in February 1981 which was intended to train in as short a period as possible a group of sociologists for taking on responsibilities in research and teaching. The students came from sixteen universities from all over the country, and had already studied a prior discipline for three years<sup>2</sup>. After graduation, slightly over half of these students began teaching at their home universities or carried out practical investigatory work for government and research organisations, while the remainder continued their studies in a two-year M.A. program beginning at Nankai University in February 1982. On completion of this program, these students will mainly become lecturers of sociology at their home universities, so that it is expected that departments of sociology will be established at leading universities all over the country by 1985.

My observations rest mainly on the following material.

(1) Student essays and discussions: A particularly important set of data proved to be the written replies to questions I posed to the students during the course of my lecture series on rural and urban sociology. At the outset of the course, I requested the students to help me get acquainted with them by writing down such personal data as their age, sex, birthplace, marital status, family background, educational and occupational experience, and by telling me how they came to study sociology, what their parents had wanted them to be, and what their specific interests within the field of sociology were. In subsequent lectures, I periodically asked them to answer essay questions on a topic related to the content of the lecture. The usual formulation of the question was: "Do you think X's theory is applicable to China? If so, in what senses? If not, how should one better grasp the situation?" Opportunity was given to write the essays in class; however, students wishing to write them outside of class were free to do so. Participation was voluntary, and essays could remain anonymous. Originally, I had intended these essays to serve solely didactic purposes. However, they proved also to provide me with a wealth of information on the ways these students perceive sociology and their own role and influence as sociologists.

Of course, these data can only describe the views and behaviour patterns of this group of students, and cannot be thought to represent any larger group. Both the composition of the class and the circumstances under which these students studied sociology were unique and cannot be expected to repeat themselves in later program cycles. On the other hand, the degree of influence which these students will have on future developments in sociology far exceeds their

numbers. Although the leading positions in sociology may continue to be occupied by members of the older generation for some years, still, eventually, it is this group of students which is likely to take over these positions. In the meantime, these students' activity particularly as teachers will have a strong influence on the generation of sociology scholars succeeding them.

(2) Unpublished investigations: Many of the students had already carried out small-scale investigations either before or during the sociology course at Nankai. Some of these sought advice on how to evaluate their data, so that I had the opportunity to see first drafts of these studies. In addition, I also learned through the students of other investigations which had not yet been published in journals or books accessible to foreign scholars.

(3) Informal talks with the leading promoters of sociology: In my function as lecturer of sociology, I of course had contact not only with the students, but also with the staff at the Philosophy Department, of which sociology was a 'special area', and with leading scholars of sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. I was able to have prolonged talks particularly with the former on the curriculum for the graduate program beginning shortly after my departure.

(4) Published materials: The amount of material published on sociology is increasing rapidly. These materials can be broadly classified into three types: (a) those discussing mainly the role sociology should play in China, and its relation to the Party both in its content and in its tasks, (b) those discussing aspects of concrete programs for action (e.g. what research or teaching emphases there should be, how sociology should be taught or organized, and (c) reports on actual ongoing or completed research. As might be expected, less material exists belonging to the last category than to the others since Marxist sociology is still in the process of being established. For this reason, the following pages will be relying more heavily on the first two types of publication than on the last.

## II. THE ROLE AND LEGITIMATION OF CHINESE MARXIST SOCIOLOGY

Marxist sociology must be conducted under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, but in practice there is a great deal of freedom in interpreting what this basic tenet of Marxist sociology actually means. How has it been interpreted in the Chinese case? As the following overview of articles published in sociological journals will indicate, the brand of Marxist sociology advocated by its promoters claims not only to be an indispensable instrument for advancing socialist construction, but also to have the right to hold a critical yardstick against Party policy and its implementation. If tolerated by the Party on these terms,

this combination of claims would allow Chinese sociologists a degree of freedom and influence seldom seen in socialist countries. How have the promoters of Chinese sociology argued their case? This section will describe the linkages which these individuals have made between Chinese Marxist sociology and the ideology and experiences of the Chinese Communist Party.

### 1. The Central Role of Sociology for Socialist Construction

A highly influential speech given by the President of the Chinese Sociological Research Society, Professor Fei Xiaotong, early in 1979 laid the foundation for subsequent discussion on the role and ideological justification of sociology in China. In this speech, Fei argues that, "When people live together, there will always unavoidably be contradictions". In the phase of socialist construction, when society is changing particularly rapidly, this is all the more the case and "not the least bit strange". What is harmful for socialist construction is not the existence of contradictions as such, but their poor regulation. If their regulation is neglected or inappropriate due to an inaccurate and unsystematic analysis of the situation, then the danger arises that non-socialist elements will gain the upper hand and slow down or even hinder the further development of socialism. Under these circumstances, a major task of the Party in this phase of societal development is to ensure that contradictions are identified as early as possible, their true character understood, and appropriate measures for their resolution found. In this way, not only will a regression be prevented, but also the process of socialist construction accelerated. Thus, if contradictions are correctly handled, they can serve as a constructive motivating force for society's further development<sup>3</sup>.

The crucial point in this argument is Fei's claim that only sociology can perform this task. He argues that, in a relatively unchanging society, contradictions can be resolved by time-honored mechanisms for regulation. Because the social problems which exist do not change considerably over time, it is not necessary for each generation to seek anew appropriate solutions for its problems. It can continue to use the mechanisms passed down to it from preceding generations and incorporated into its society's traditions. In a rapidly changing society, however, traditional ways of doing things are no longer effective in dealing with new situations. Under these circumstances, constant scientific analysis of society is required, and since the driving force behind change in socialist society is the advancement of science and technology, a scientific approach to social problems is possible. This approach not only finds solutions to society's problems, it also saves its members from having to discover solutions through trial and error, a process causing great suffering and waste of human and material resources<sup>4</sup>.

The linkages which this argument has with Mao Zedong's Thought are obvious. The inevitability of contradictions even in a socialist society is a benchmark

of Mao Zedong's Thought ('permanent contradictions'). The idea that the advancement of society is only possible through the 'correct handling' of contradictions, equally so. Marxist is certainly the view that man's true nature, his ability to influence the speed of societal development through conscious intervention based on the scientific analysis of the laws underlying societal development, finds increasingly complete expression as society (specifically, the level of development of the productive forces) advances. By emphasizing its scientific nature, Fei raises sociology to the level of an indispensable instrument for the Party's guidance of society through the socialist phase. Sociology becomes the symbol and the expression of man's ability to influence social relations. The denial of its existence would be tantamount to a denial of man's right to free himself from the fetters of exploitation and oppression.

The indispensability of sociology for the Party, although through this ideological tour de force taking the wind out of the sails of any counterargument for a renewed prohibition of sociology, does not in itself, however, ensure freedom of movement for Chinese sociologists. In fact, it could easily be concluded that Party control over sociological work should be particularly tight. In 1979, Fei did not go further than to say that sociology can only grasp 'objective reality' when it combines the theoretical guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought on the one hand, with the empirical investigation of major social problems on the other<sup>5</sup>. How should this be interpreted? Does the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought in the theoretical realm mean that empirical sociology should content itself with social investigation, and refrain from developing sociological theory in the light of empirical findings? An examination of other articles written between 1980 and 1982 make clear that this is not the intention of sociology's promoters.

## 2. Sociological Theory

### a) Sociology and Historical Materialism

In 1980, there was still disagreement on the relationship which sociology should have to historical materialism. One author distinguished three positions:

- (1) historical materialism is a total historical philosophy of society and represents the theoretical basis of sociology,
- (2) historical materialism is a school of thought with a complete system of ideas and methodology, which can be called 'Marxist sociology' in contrast to 'bourgeois sociology', and
- (3) historical materialism is not a complete system of thought and methods, but rather a component part of sociology.

The position this author defended at that time was the first view<sup>6</sup>.

In the course of the next two years, however, during which time discussions

on the relationship between historical materialism and sociology were apparently held in various units all over the country, a new and far more refined version of the first position was developed. This version, presented in an article published in the sociological journal, *Shehui* (Society), in 1982<sup>7</sup>, deserves our close attention. Here, historical materialism and sociology are described as being related to each other in the same way as the 'general' is related to the 'specific'. Historical materialism provides the general social categories for analyzing society (e.g. productive forces, relations of production, class, base and superstructure), as well as the universal laws of relationship between major social variables (e.g. between the productive forces, relations of production and social consciousness). Sociology's task is to determine through sociological research and investigation both the specific relationship between these variables in any given society at any given point in time, and the specific ways in which these variables and relationships are expressed in concrete social phenomena. To do this, it is free to supplement the analytic categories and frame of reference provided by historical materialism with additional categories and theories. Thus, one can speak of 'status groups' and not only of 'classes', and refer to 'specialized sociological theories' in addition to the general sociological theory represented by historical materialism.

The implications of this argument for the degree of Party control over the direction and content of Chinese sociology are self-evident. Historical materialism 'guides' sociological research insofar as it provides the general interpretive framework for research. Its general character - its preoccupation with universal rather than particular laws of societal development - however, makes it inadequate for analyzing conditions in specific societies. When it comes to concrete empirical research, recourse must be made to specialized sociological theories which are developed and refined through the process of empirical investigation. There is thus not one set of sociological theory, but two. Each has its own realm of applicability and relevance, and each complements the other.

As long as sociological research does not overstep the boundaries of the level of analysis prescribed to it (i.e. the study of specific societies), theory-building is not only acceptable, but even encouraged. Through the mutual borrowing and adoption of useful concepts, ideas and theories developed in each sphere, both general and specialized sociological theory are expected to benefit. In summing up 'Point Three' of the article, which begins with the statement, "Historical materialism cannot replace sociological research; the relationship between the two is one of the general to the specific", the author writes:

"The relationship between historical materialism, general and specialized sociology is actually expressed in the particular character of the internal structure of Marxist sociology. In this structure, one can distinguish three

mutually interconnected levels: general theory - namely, historical materialism, specialized theory, and the research of specific aspects of society. The relationship between these three levels is: historical materialism, which (should be) seen as general sociological theory, is the basic theory and foundation of the methodology of scientific sociology. The specialized sociologies and their research must be guided by general sociological theory - historical materialism, and the perspective of general sociological theory must also be enriched and concretized through the level of specialized sociological theory."<sup>8</sup>

The article, however, not only goes so far as to secure, in the most explicit terms, a sphere of independence for sociological research and theory-building ("The leading role of historical materialism for sociology implies that sociology should have its own independent research areas and theoretical system"<sup>9</sup>), it even specifies preconditions for securing this independence which in effect prescribe that sociologists not view historical materialism as a unified system of thought which must be adopted in its entirety, but as a loose conglomerate of concepts and ideas from which can be selected at will and according to the exigencies of the specific task at hand. In unequivocal terms, sociologists are admonished:

"Don't indiscriminately copy the system of historical materialism..."

"Don't attend to each and every aspect (of historical materialism), but rather set priorities according to the specific case."<sup>10</sup>

The relationship between specialized sociological theory and historical materialism is further clarified in the article's concluding remarks. Here, it is pointed out that all sciences - both natural and social - necessarily advance through a dialectical process of synthesis, 'recategorization', and new synthesis. In the history of the development of sociology, the 'first synthesis' was provided by historical materialism. Now, however, China, it is argued, has entered the phase of 'recategorization', and for this phase it is both natural and necessary for the further development of sociology that specialized sociological theory and research be permitted to bloom<sup>11</sup>.

This last argument is significant. By using a Marxist dialectical perspective, the authors have made it possible not only to justify the existence and development of specialized sociological theory and research, but also to incorporate it into a Marxist interpretive framework. The authors' appeal to free determination, without Party control of the content and direction of sociological theory, is not phrased as a 'right' of sociologists, but as an historical necessity.

#### b) The Place of 'Bourgeois' Sociological Theory

The promoters of sociology in China today, although wishing to create a Marxist sociology which specifically suits Chinese social conditions, do not trace

their forefathers to the Chinese sociologists of the 1930's and 40's<sup>12</sup>, but to Marx, Engels and Mao Zedong<sup>13</sup>. This is understandable enough. 'Bourgeois' sociology is said to serve the interests of the capitalist class. It therefore is seen as an instrument of oppression and exploitation of the broad masses<sup>14</sup>.

Although denying bourgeois sociology a central place in this sense, the sociology curriculum (see below), the rapid translation of many 'bourgeois' sociological classics and the attempts to publish overviews of western sociological literature all testify to the fact that Chinese sociology in no way rejects bourgeois sociology in its entirety. From the point of view of the question of Party control, it is of particular interest here to note that this behavior does not stand in contradiction to Marxist ideology, but in fact has been justified by making use of Marxist arguments.

In his speech of 1979 cited earlier, Fei Xiaotong argued that it would be unscientific to reject bourgeois sociology as a whole. First, a Marxist analysis must see class interests in their historical context. At the time when the bourgeoisie rose to power in the West, its interests had an emancipatory effect on a society which had previously been characterized by feudal forms of oppression and exploitation. It was only after the bourgeoisie had established its dominant position in society that its sociology became an instrument of oppressive class interests. For this reason, Fei argues, bourgeois sociology should first of all be distinguished according to its historical period. In some countries of the world which are only now freeing themselves from the fetters of feudalism, bourgeois sociology can be emancipatory. Second, a Marxist analysis must make a class analysis of bourgeois society. Since bourgeois society includes also a proletarian class, its sociology can also be assumed to contain some elements which could be called "proletarian sociology". It is the task of Chinese Marxist sociologists to identify these elements and to incorporate them into their sociology<sup>15</sup>.

### 3. Sociological Methods

#### a) The 'Marxist' Method

Since Fei Xiaotong stated in 1979 that "Social investigation is the fundamental work of sociological research"<sup>16</sup>, a series of articles have appeared which attempt to clarify the specific nature of Marxist sociological investigation. These discussions link sociological investigation to Marxism, Mao Zedong Thought and Chinese Communist Party ideology in such a way, that - as in the case of sociological theory - Chinese sociology has, on the one hand, gained a strong ideological foundation, and on the other, won considerable freedom for its investigators. How has this been achieved?

As ideological justification, it is argued that sociological investigation is merely a systematized form of the social investigations carried out by Marx, Engels,



and particularly Mao Zedong<sup>17</sup>. These studies are depicted as generally being guided by historical materialism (defining the subject matter and major hypotheses of the investigation) and dialectical materialism (defining the process of investigation from the initial unsystematic perception of phenomena through to the formation of rational thought)<sup>18</sup>. The investigations of Mao Zedong are in addition described as exemplifying the Maoist precepts to "seek the truth from facts" (shishi qiushi), and to follow the mass-line<sup>19</sup>.

Since these latter investigations are seen as the most significant and immediate antecedents of Chinese Marxist sociological investigation today and are therefore given more weight, it is important to understand what specific meanings these precepts are meant to have for social investigators.

A careful examination of these articles indicates that these precepts, although explicitly claiming to ensure the 'scientificness' of sociological investigation, in fact also claim for the social investigator a certain freedom of movement. In a revealing article entitled, "Develop our Party's fine tradition of sociological investigation", this point comes out particularly clearly. In emphasizing the importance of the phrase, "seek the truth from facts", the authors warn:

"If we do not seek the truth from facts and start from practice, but instead start from books, concepts, intentions, instructions and other things (reflecting) subjective consciousness, then social investigation will necessarily go down the wrong road, and the result will be that we will get bogged down in the mud of subjectivism and formalism."<sup>20</sup>

This passage makes clear that, just as theory ("books, concepts") is subjective and formalistic when divorced from practice, so also are "intentions" and "instructions". In order that there be no doubt as to the source of these intentions and instructions, the authors later describe current 'guidelines and policies of the Central Committee' as having as yet inadequately linked up with actual experience.

"The present guidelines and policies of the Central Committee have been determined by the scientific summarization of links between past experiences and current social practice. However, there are still many as yet unknown areas which need further exploration. The resolutions issued by all organizational levels still have to link up with actual experiences of their own areas and units."<sup>21</sup>

That this is not the ideal way Party guidelines should be formed is obvious from an excerpt taken from the same passage:

"Marx's power lay in his scientificness: 'The Communist Party relies on the food of science'. The Party spirit adheres to the truth and above all to scientific truth."<sup>22</sup>

Since the Party does not a priori possess objective truth, but must acquire

it through practice, the role of social investigation is to provide a link between actual experiences and Party policy formulation by collecting, summarizing and systematizing data. The nature of this link is made explicitly clear in the following statement: "To carry out social investigation is actually (to provide) policy feedback." In carrying out this task, investigators are, of course, obliged to serve the Party. However, because the Party has no a priori claim to possessing the truth, adherence to the principle of "Party spirit" (dangxing) does not mean absolute obedience to Party directives and instructions:

"The value of social investigation lies in its scientific nature, and this is also the case for the principle of Party spirit. Both must bow before the truth and respect science."<sup>23</sup>

Not only is "seeking the truth from facts" used to provide social investigators with a means to reduce Party control, but also the precept of the mass-line. Social investigations should take the masses as the starting point of investigations and also "return to the masses". That is, the question selected for study should be related to problems commonly shared by the broad masses, and a solution to these problems should be sought which benefits the people at large. Furthermore, the masses should be included in the actual process of data collection and evaluation<sup>24</sup>.

The explicit reason given for following the mass-line investigation style is that it enhances the scientific nature and hence the likelihood of grasping objective reality of the investigation: If the investigation studies concrete problems affecting the masses, and if it is genuinely concerned with understanding the true nature of the situation and seeks to find solutions which benefit the masses, then the masses will gain confidence in the investigators, see them as "liberators", and tell them everything they know<sup>25</sup>.

In the light of the hints concerning the meaning of the principle of "seeking the truth from facts", however, the mass-line style can also be seen to perform another function, namely of protecting investigators from excessive intervention both in the definition of the problem for investigation, and in the process of data collection itself. It also provides investigators with a legitimate argument for recommending shifts in policy or in policy-emphases (namely by referring to the benefits of their recommendation for the "masses"). No explicit statement to this effect is made in these articles. However, an interpretation of this kind fits in well with the general framework now being recommended for interaction between the political apparatus and academic establishments. These views will be taken up in a separate section below.

#### b) The Place of 'Bourgeois' Methods

Analogous to the case of bourgeois sociological theory, not only are 'bourgeois' methods - methods used in capitalist societies - being studied; their

use is also being ideologically justified. Two arguments are most common. The first claims that science and technology have advanced since the time of Marx and Engels, so that new methods and procedures not available to the forefathers of Marxist sociology have arisen. In line with the increasing progress of science and technology, these new techniques are argued to offer a degree of sophistication not known in Marx's time. The advocates of this position therefore conclude that a "modernized" Marxist sociology would logically have to incorporate these techniques. This is all the more the case in China today since it has set as one of its goals the modernization of science<sup>26</sup>.

The second view argues that the degree of effectiveness of techniques for obtaining an objective view of the situation depends not on the technique itself, but on the system of thought guiding the research and on the type of society in which the research is carried out. According to this view, methods developed and applied by sociologists in capitalist societies have not been able to realize their full potential for grasping objective reality. Whether belonging to the "idealist", "empiricist", "phenomenological", or other school of thought, each standpoint is said to be "one-sided," thus hindering full use of the method. In addition, the conditions prevailing in capitalist society are not thought to be conducive to efficient and effective sociological research - there is no overall planning and coordination of research, the institutional prerequisites for organizing large-scale research projects do not exist, and the investigations do not benefit the broad masses. In a planned and organized socialist society and under the guidance of historical and dialectical materialism, however, bourgeois methods can be put to full use<sup>27</sup>. This argument is therefore making the claim that bourgeois methods require a Marxist sociology and a socialist society in order to come to fruition. It is then only a small step to the view that Marxist sociology has an obligation to apply bourgeois methods, so that these can be released from the limiting influence of bourgeois society and a bourgeois class standpoint.

#### 4. The Appropriate Subject Matter of Chinese Sociology

In 1979, Fei Xiaotong, although assigning Chinese sociology a central role for socialist construction, still was modest about the areas of study which sociology should cover. In a pragmatic manner, he stated that sociology should study all those aspects of society not yet studied by other social science disciplines. Questions relating to commodity production and communication, being the subject of study of economists, were therefore excluded from sociology's purview, just as were all topics covered by political science (namely: "questions relating to class contradiction, class struggle, functions of the state, democracy and dictatorship") and ethnology (the study of the national minorities). Consoling, Fei pointed out that this still left a number of important topics for sociology such as, "problems of housing, population, family and childhood. . ." <sup>28</sup>

Already one year later, another advocate of Chinese sociology, Du Renzhi, published in the same journal an article solely devoted to the question of the appropriate subject matter of sociology. In its opening paragraph, we read: "Sociology is a very broad discipline. It takes as its subject of study the entire society."<sup>29</sup> In a subsequent section, a listing of appropriate subjects for sociological research takes up a full page of small print and includes even such questions as "the relation of the development of natural resources to world population" under a rubric entitled "world sociology"<sup>30</sup>. Within this long list, the author sees as the major subject matter of Chinese sociology the study of all aspects of the two major societal transitions (feudalism to capitalism, and capitalism to socialism) on both the theoretical and practical (China's own experience) levels. He feels particular attention should be given to uncovering the fundamental economic laws determining societal development. Referring to the lack of concrete and systematic economic analyses so far carried out in the People's Republic of China the author states that this has led to serious misjudgements of the actual stage of development China has reached, and even to the desire to skip development stages. Chinese sociologists should, therefore, in studying the operation of these economic laws, pay particular attention to the questions of the correct relation between collective ownership and ownership by the whole people, and the conditions for their merging; second, to the relations between individual and collective, collective and collective, and collective and societal benefit, and the conditions for their unification; and third, to the relation between the peasant, working and intelligentsia classes, and the conditions for the disappearance of classes and class struggle<sup>31</sup>.

Another emphasis of sociological research should be "political sociology". Here also, the author's list is monstrous -

"Questions of proletarian dictatorship, socialist democracy and a sound legal system; the question of the relations between the expansion and deepening of socialist democracy and the state system and the people; political life, the question of unifying the people's power with their duties, the question of unifying freedom with public discipline, the question of the contradiction between the centralization of state organizations and departments and decentralized power, as well as the questions of hindering localism, particularism, factionalism and centralism; the question of the correct relation between democracy and concentrated power, as well as the question of the difference between concentrated leadership and individual autocratic rule; the question of the difference between the conscious selection (of leaders) by the masses and blind obedience, the questions of encouraging and sanctioning social (i.e. public) opinion."<sup>32</sup>

From these listings, two observations can be made: the subject matter of sociology has been expanded since Fei Xiaotong's speech to include economic and political phenomena, thus encroaching upon the subject matter of other social science disciplines; and second, the sociological perspective which is

to be applied in the study of these subjects does not close its eyes to the question of the correctness of Party policy, but on the contrary appears to have a deliberately critical bent.

Now, two years later, these views can be considered to have become orthodoxy among Chinese sociologists. In a speech given to a meeting of the Shanghai Sociological Society in 1981 and published in *Shehui* in May 1982, the leading proponent of sociology in China, Fei Xiaotong, claimed: "Sociology has a particular character, namely, it is emerging from (a situation of having) a specialized narrow scope, and linking up with all kinds of knowledge"<sup>33</sup>. Its task should not be to confine itself to one perspective, but to provide a synthesis of various other perspectives. That these other 'perspectives' refer to other disciplines is evident from the examples Fei gives for the appropriate approach of sociology. In the sociological study of the family, for instance, sociologists should not stop short of analyzing the political consequences of different family arrangements and situations simply because this is a question for political science and not for the sociology of the family in the narrow sense. They should approach these political questions simply from a sociological perspective. Sociology should also examine the exact meaning of economic laws. Although everyone speaks of economic laws, he asks, "but what, in the final analysis, are these laws? We must go out and look for these"<sup>34</sup>.

Fei's deliberate selection of these examples shows that he is interested in placing economic and political phenomena in the forefront of sociological research. Justifying this, he writes, "what is facing us (today) is a new period . . . in which past experience is inadequate"<sup>35</sup>. The critical tone here is obvious, and the connection between this and earlier statements is not difficult to identify: one area of past experience which has proven inadequate is inappropriate policy based on inadequate data concerning existing social conditions.

The expansion of sociology into political and economic spheres, and the critical examination of policy have not only been declared programmatically as desirable, they are also being increasingly practised. In an amazingly blunt paper on the origins for mental illness in China, one author attributes a large amount of mental illness to the excessive frequency and psychological pressure of political campaigns in China.

"Political campaigns not only make people's minds excessively nervous and tired out, they also, to varying degrees, exert pressure (on people), even to the point that contradictions and conflicts arise in one's thinking. These psychological factors disturb and destroy the normal dynamic equilibrium of neurological activity. This can not only directly cause mental illnesses, such as reactive (i.e. exogenous) mental illnesses and hysteria. It can also indirectly trigger off certain mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, mental illness at menopause and other (illnesses). In our country there are relatively many campaigns. During each campaign the (high) incidence of (mental) illness (treated) in clinics is nothing new."<sup>36</sup>

The author then gives us statistics on the incidence of mental illness over a fifteen year period since 1966 in Wuhan, illustrating that, in the years of political campaigns (he cites 1970 and 1974/75), the incidence of mental illness rose sharply, while in the relatively peaceful years of 1973, and 1977 to the present, it correspondingly dropped. He concludes:

"From this we can see that the more chaotic the political situation in society is, the higher the (incidence of) mental illness. . .

We can see that if society is peaceful, it is possible that the incidence of mental illness will decline."<sup>37</sup>

##### 5. Institutional Relations of Sociologists with the State

Concurrent with articles discussing sociology's role in China during the current phase of socialist construction, the question of what institutional arrangements are suitable and most effective for performing this role has also been raised. In a significant speech delivered at the 1981 meeting of the Shanghai Sociological Society by Yu Guangyuan, Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, this question received particular attention. Yu begins by lamenting the fact that, at the moment, "the power apparatus is gigantic, while the knowledge apparatus is weak and deficient"<sup>38</sup>. This, of course, has consequences for the degree of influence sociologists can have. The question then is, what goals sociologists should have in trying to correct this situation. Yu states that, in principle, there are two possible approaches: either sociologists allow themselves to be incorporated individually into the political apparatus and to carry out their work within this framework, or they attempt to increase their influence by advocating a clear-cut division of labor between the knowledge and political apparatus, in which sociologists do the research and present policy recommendations, while the political apparatus concentrates solely on the questions of implementing the policy in the most efficient and effective ways possible. By reducing the latter's functions to "merely questions of applying power" the political apparatus would both require less personnel and be less all-powerful. Accompanying this trend towards "simplification" of the political apparatus, the intellectuals could make a concentrated effort to strengthen their position, so that the existing extreme imbalance in political power and influence could be shifted in their favor.

The alternative Yu prefers is the latter one. He points out that intellectuals who have worked as individuals in political organizations have not only had little influence, they have also tended not to voice criticism. If sociology is to play its role properly, therefore, it must distance itself from the center of political power and establish a counterweight.

Discussing questions such as these is a politically delicate matter and it is not surprising that few speak out so explicitly as here. However, indirect references in other articles suggest that the position is not without its advocates. When

a long article describing in detail the positive aspects of the "work style" at the Xinanlian University, a renowned university of the 1930's and 40's is published, and when in this article particularly the solidarity of the academic community due to a high level of democracy and communal spirit is emphasized<sup>39</sup>, it is difficult to see this merely as an historical study without 'lessons' for the present - especially since the author is an important promoter of sociology in China today.

Fei Xiaotong's views on the experiences of American intellectuals with their own government, whether intended to be interpreted as indirect guidelines and 'lessons' for Chinese sociologists or not, certainly defend a similar position. Although Fei regrets in this publication that intellectuals fell out of favor with their government after a short period of honeymoon during the New Deal, he also makes clear that he sees nothing positive in the recent trend of government-commissioned research. With fund-giving agencies defining the research questions, resources and the time period for research, and with their often unencumbered appropriation of research results for political purposes, Fei finds that knowledge in America has become a commodity over which the intellectual community, whether it admits it or not, has only token control. He concludes:

"The linking up of the social sciences with practical problems is nothing bad... but when applied science dilutes or pours out (chongzou) theoretical science, then one must say that it is a pity."<sup>40</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

The picture which emerges from this discussion is that the Chinese version of Marxist sociology is claiming a great deal of freedom for itself in both the theoretical and practical realms. On the theoretical level, it claims the right to apply and develop 'bourgeois' sociological theories and methods, while at the same time feeling free to apply Marxist theory selectively, and according to purely pragmatic considerations. On the practical level, it reserves the right to determine, independent of government or Party influence, the subject matter and questions for sociological research, the way the research should be carried out, and the interpretation of the results of research. Although there should be no doubt left in the minds of political leaders that Chinese sociologists today set as their foremost goal the Party's goal of socialist construction, still, they do not see themselves as uncritical advocates and executors of Party policy, but rather as 'truth-seekers', who ruthlessly uncover social problems and their origins regardless of Party policy.

In the light of almost thirty years of political persecution and oppression, one might expect that such audacious claims would appear almost impudent to the current regime. However, in terms of the Party's own ideology, the role and

content of Chinese Marxist sociology advocated by its promoters should not threaten the Party's position and authority. The Maoist claim that social contradictions are 'permanent' means that the uncovering of social problems cannot, in itself, be considered a criticism of the Party. Furthermore, since, according to the Maoist<sup>41</sup> theory of knowledge, the Party does not a priori possess the truth, it can 'make mistakes' without losing its legitimacy. Therefore, on the level of ideology, at least, the definition of Chinese Marxist sociology as critical sociology<sup>42</sup> requiring a certain distance from the ideological and political center is acceptable, and ideologically difficult to refute.

Seen in this light, one could say that the particular claims of Chinese Marxist sociology to relative autonomy from immediate Party control are possible because Marxism-Leninism in China has been modified in certain directions conducive to such claims. Not only do the above-mentioned Maoist tenets of 'permanent contradiction' and 'seeking the truth from facts' help the sociologists' cause, but also, as we have seen, the Maoist concepts of the mass-line and the relationship of the 'general' to the 'specific'. The specific from Chinese Marxist sociology is taking is, therefore, at least on the programmatic level, not a coincidence of history or a mere reflection of 'traditional' attitudes of Chinese intellectuals to the state and society, but rather a product of, and a response to, the specifically Maoist version of Marxism-Leninism. In this sense, the Chinese version of Marxism-Leninism and the character of Chinese Marxist sociology as it has evolved in the past two years can be seen as ideologically complementary and compatible.

Chinese Marxist sociology is also interesting in another light. Due to the positions it has taken in methodology and theory, it is in fact incorporating many schools and strands of thought which have been viewed in the West either as mutually incompatible, or as standing in acute tension to one another. If western Marxists have been divided on the question of whether Marxism is an empirical science seeking causal laws which determine man's condition, or a moral philosophy which allows man an active role in the historical process, Chinese Marxist sociology sees man as both subject and object. If quantitative and qualitative methods in western 'bourgeois' sociology have become virtually separate methodologies, in Chinese Marxist sociology only the combination of the two methods is seen as efficacious for arriving at scientific knowledge. If in western 'bourgeois' sociology there are often different specialists for micro- and macro-level studies, in Chinese Marxist sociology, these two levels are supposed to be carried out in conjunction, and if in the West, theoretical and empirical research have often developed with little reference to each other, in China, theory and practice are seen as necessarily interdependent. We can therefore conclude that the future development of Chinese Marxist sociology can be expected to prove interesting not only in terms of its relation to the state, but also as an example of the discipline of sociology in its own right.



The question remains, however, whether the claims the current promoters of sociology have made for sociology will in fact be carried out by their successors, and if they are, whether they will be accepted by the Chinese leadership. Certainly ideological compatibility alone will not determine the ultimate fate and direction of Chinese Marxist sociology. Although it is too early to predict with any certainty the final outcome of the future interaction between Chinese sociologists and the political leadership, it is possible to make tentative predictions on the likely future behavior of the first cohort of young sociologists being trained at Nankai University from 1981-82. Since this cohort will subsequently be engaged mainly in teaching, its influence on future generations of sociologists will be considerable.

### III. CHINESE MARXIST SOCIOLOGY IN PRACTICE: OBSERVATIONS AT NANKAI UNIVERSITY

#### 1. Career Orientations and Academic Identity

The majority of students who participated in the undergraduate sociology program had expressed interest in doing so<sup>43</sup>. (Only 2 out of 34 respondents had been 'sent' by their respective units to Nankai<sup>44</sup>). In an open question asking why they had chosen to study sociology, I received answers which can be grouped into three categories: "serving the country", "personal, academic interest" and "good career opportunities". According to this categorization, 20 indicated personal, academic interest; 10 wished to serve the needs of the country, and 2 found sociology promising as a career (see Table 1).

The question remains, however, how these answers should be interpreted. Is it correct to conclude that those stating "serving the country" as their main motive are more likely to be loyal to the Party than those expressing a "personal, academic interest" or an interest in the career opportunities? The observations I made during my stay at Nankai and described in the sections below indicate that this interpretation would be incorrect.

One set of data which provides us with some tentative hypotheses is the occupational and educational background of the students' fathers on the one hand (Table 2), and the desires parents had for their children's future (Table 3) on the other. Looking at Table 2, we can first note that fathers' occupations appear not to be markedly different for the three groups of students. What does differ are educational levels. The lowest educational level of fathers was found among the group of students most interested in career opportunities, while the highest was found among those stating an academic interest in sociology (7 out of 20, or 35 % of Group I students had fathers with a university education, while only 2 out of 10, or 20 % of Group II students had fathers belonging to this category).

Table 1

## Students' Reasons for Studying Sociology

Reason Given	Number of Students	Total
Personal, academic interest (Group I)		
"Am very interested in sociology"	15	
"Am somewhat interested"	2	
"Was not particularly interested in my prior subject, and sociology sounded interesting"	3	
		20
Interested in serving the country (Group II)		
"My country's needs have changed"	5	
"My country has many social problems which need to be solved"	3	
"Sociology is beneficial for China"	2	
		10
Career opportunities (Group III)		
"There are not many who study it"	1	
"To make greater progress in the academic world"	1	
		2
		32

Table 2

## Fathers' Occupation and Educational Level

Students' Reasons	Fathers' Occupation and Educational Level		Total	
Group I Personal, academic interest	Cadre university education upper-middle school lower-middle school grammar school	3	11	
		5		
		2		
		1		
	Peasant grammar school illiterate	3	4	
		1		
	Teacher university education upper-middle school	2	3	
		1		
		Doctor (univ. education)	1	1
		Editor (univ. education)	1	1
	Group II Serve the country	Cadre upper-middle school lower-middle school	3	4
			1	
Teacher university education lower-middle school		1	3	
		2		
		Doctor (univ. education)	1	1
		Editor (upper-middle school)	1	1
		Army officer (upper-middle school)	1	1
Group III Career opportunities		Cadre grammar school education		2
	2			
			32	

In the light of these data, the students' answers could tentatively be interpreted as mere reflections of the different attitudes of their fathers to the value of academic pursuits. Those stemming from highly educated families (Group I) are more likely to think in terms of the academic value of intellectual work as an end in itself than those with less educated fathers. Because it is now permitted to state personal preferences openly, those with this orientation would also feel free to do so. According to this interpretation, the answers of Group I students would then not imply less loyalty to Party goals, but be rather merely a reflection of the changed political conditions in China today which allow greater freedom of expression.

The data in Table 3 seem to bear out this interpretation from another angle. Here, we see that, in terms of parents' desires for their children, Group I and II students do not differ markedly. Regardless of whether students stated "serving the country" or "academic interest" as their major motive, parents in both categories were mainly interested in having their children receive a high-level education and become intellectuals or professionals rather than political cadres. The academic pressures on their children could even be assumed to be greater for Group II than Group I students, since the discrepancy between father's educational level and the desired educational level for their children is larger than in Group I.

Table 3

## Parent's Employment Desires for their Children

Reasons	Parental wishes		No answer	
	No particular wish	Wish		
Group I				
Personal, academic interest	7	Scholar	4	3
		Teacher	2	
		Technician	2	
		Doctor	1	
		Writer	1	
Group II				
Serve the country	1	Scholar	2	3
		Doctor	2	
		"Some kind of professional expert"	1	
		Journalist	1	
Group III				
Career opportunities	2		0	0
Total	10		16	6

If the majority of students appear to be oriented towards pursuing academic rather than political careers, the question still remains to be clarified, what role they see their academic work as playing for the Party. Do they both share the basic consensus of the leading promoters of sociology with Party goals and ideology on the one hand, and have the will to criticize policy and policy implementation on the basis of concrete investigations on the other? The evidence in terms both of their educational background, and of their actual activities indicate that they do.

## 2. Educational Background and the Relative Emphasis of 'Bourgeois' and Marxist Sociology

As is evident from Table 4, the majority of students had studied philosophy as their prior discipline. The second most common discipline was economics. The philosophy curriculum at Chinese universities, although varying in detail, always offers a core of courses in the content and history of the rise of theories of historical and dialectical materialism. We can therefore assume that those students coming to sociology with an educational background in this field had a good command of the philosophical foundations of Marxist social thought. The prior students of economics appear also to have had a strong foundation in this area. It seems, therefore, that the recommendation of Fei Xiaotong to select students for training in sociology who are strong in Marxist-Leninist theory<sup>45</sup> has been carried out in practice.

Table 4

### Student's Prior Discipline at the University

Prior Discipline	Number of Students
Philosophy	18
Economics	6
Literature	1
Political Economy	1
Journalism	1
World History	1
Political Science	1
Chinese History	1
Total	29

In addition to prior background in this area, both the undergraduate and the graduate curricula in sociology offered an obligatory course in Marxist social theory. This course was taught side by side with courses in general and specialized 'bourgeois' theory and, in keeping with the suggestions made by promoters of sociology in published articles, the content of this course has not been dogmatically defined in advance, but is expected to change and develop as the dialogue between 'bourgeois' and Marxist sociological theory progresses. On the level of methods, 'bourgeois' methods were particularly emphasized in the undergraduate course, the justification being that these can serve as helpful tools in the analysis of data gathered in empirical investigations (the method considered particularly characteristic of Chinese Marxism-Leninism). In the graduate course, the combination of Marxist with bourgeois methods was to be put into practice in the form of a one-year practicum, in which students would carry out an investigation from beginning to end, writing up their results in a master's thesis at the end of the year.

The curriculum, therefore, although including a number of courses in 'bourgeois' method and theory cannot be interpreted as representing the view that Marxist sociology is unimportant. Rather, bourgeois sociology was emphasized mainly because this was less familiar to the students. As a study group discussing the place of bourgeois methods in Chinese sociology put it, the current problem facing Chinese sociologists is not that 'traditional methods' (here referring to the method of social investigation) are not being used, but that modern bourgeois' methods are not known and therefore entirely neglected. As a consequence, this group also came to the conclusion that, for the present at least, the emphasis should be placed on bourgeois methods<sup>46</sup>.

Whatever the long-term goals are, still, it is evident that the first cohort of sociology students, and particularly those who did not continue on in the graduate program, were exposed to more coursework related to 'bourgeois' than to Marxist sociology. A reaction to this imbalance could, indeed, be seen in some of the investigations students planned to carry out on their return to their home areas. One student, for instance, was so oriented towards 'bourgeois' methods (understood generally to refer to quantitative methods) that he had written up a long questionnaire solely composed of multiple-choice questions intended to be filled out by rural commune members. The topic being "changes in the rural family", one question read: "How would you describe conflicts in your family: (a) very severe, (b) relatively severe, (c) not too severe, (d) relatively unimportant?" The exaggerated use of one means of measurement need not, however persist over time. It may only express a phase in the learning process. In the long-run, I do not think that 'traditional' methods of investigation such as group discussion meetings or participant observation methods which have proven effective in gathering information in the Chinese countryside will be totally forgotten. Given the undogmatic attitude of the students, it is more likely that, once the students have gathered some experience, they will use whatever methods prove most suitable and effective, and they will

soon find that qualitative research methods have their value too.

### 3. Criticism and Consensus

The appeal to the younger generation of sociologists by its leading proponents to uncover and analyze social problems is inevitably a call to social criticism. Just how far are these students in fact willing to go? What, if any, criticism do they make, and what evidence is there that the latitude of criticism will increase or decrease in the future?

If we consider a general orientation to social problems as a basic precondition for any social criticism, then the students can be said to meet this condition almost without exception. None on my questionnaire named 'sociological theory' as a main area of interest, while 7 stated 'applied' or 'empirical' sociology or 'methods of social investigation', and the rest named specific social problems, such as youth problems, unemployment, housing, family and marriage, the situation of women, problems of administrative organization, or the more general areas of urban and rural sociology. There is, however, a certain bias in orientation towards problems in urban areas. In the essays written in class, most students described urban areas as "hectic" (jinzhang), polluted, providing poor transportation, recreation and shopping facilities, and allocating inadequate housing, leading either to little contact between neighbours (in high-rise housing developments), or to long distances between workplace and home. Rural areas, on the other hand, were generally considered more peaceful, the rhythm of work slower, and relations between neighbours warmer (wennuan). For these reasons, both mental illness and crime were considered to occur more frequently in cities than in the country.

These views of urban and rural life and their consequences for crime and mental illness rates are commonly held in the press. There were also recent sociological investigations published and circulated among the students during my stay which probably influenced the students' views. Nevertheless, their views are not entirely determined by opinions already published in the press or scholarly journals. This is evident from the fact that two students writing on the topic of mental illness claimed that mental illness was more likely to occur in rural than urban areas. One argued that the very fact that everyone knew everybody was a mental strain on rural people, because one had no freedom to act in ways different from prevailing customs. The other felt that particularly young and old people in the countryside were susceptible to mental illness - the latter, because there was no old age insurance, the former, because they "cannot afford to desire a woman from the city (for marriage)", and because the type of work and income level in the country "is not ideal". In addition, one other student, although arguing that mental illness was less likely in rural areas, gave as her reason not the greater peacefulness of rural life, but the fact that commune members are physically so exhausted at the end of the day

that they 'don't have time to think, and just go to bed'.

Although these three students represent the minority, still it is significant that the two students claiming mental illness to be more frequent in rural areas grew up there, and the third had lived in the country during the 'xia-xiang' movement for almost three years. What this implies is that, although press reports do influence students' opinions, personal experience still acts as a filter. Students find reports enlightening and use the arguments presented in the press or scholarly journals only when they feel the findings agree with, or at least do not contradict, their own prior personal experience. In these cases, existing reports serve as a 'green light' for stating similar positions, or for arguing a position more forcefully. If, however, the findings are not verified by personal experience, students remain sceptical and hold tentatively to their own views. Although often phrased carefully, they even express these deviating views in writing.

The interpretation that personal experience and place of origin which is usually connected with it, influence strongly students' views, is helpful in explaining the overwhelming orientation among the group of students at Nankai toward urban problems. According to my questionnaire (31 answers), 19 grew up in large cities (over 500 000 inhabitants), 5 in medium-sized or small cities, and 7 in rural areas. Although the majority of urban dwellers had lived and worked in the countryside during the 'xiaxiang' movement, some had been sent to communes located in urban suburbs, which we can assume to be relatively well-off. Others, although sent farther away, often did a good deal of administrative work and appear to have lived quite comfortably. Still others said that they were not welcomed by the peasants and therefore had little contact with them. Finally, the few that were sent to very 'backward' areas in the hinterland found the peasants 'peaceful', mainly because they were either still entirely cut off from communication with urban centers, or had such low incomes and such few educational opportunities that they considered it unrealistic even to dream of arriving at the standards of living enjoyed by urbanites. Although this last group of students did not acquire a distorted picture of the attitudes of commune members in the area they visited, nevertheless, they mistakenly assumed that their impressions applied to the situation in rural areas generally. Further confirmation that place of origin strongly influences an orientation to either rural or urban problems are the fields of interest which students coming from urban and rural areas indicated in the questionnaires. No students coming from large cities gave rural sociology as an area of interest, while 4 of 7 students coming from the countryside, and one of 5 students coming from medium-sized and small cities did do so.

There is no reason to assume, however, that future research emphases will necessarily correlate with the proportion of students coming from rural or urban areas. If research in rural areas were stated in the future as an important program of action, it can be assumed that research teams would be sent there. Even at the close of my lecture series in rural and urban sociology,



two students coming from large cities told me that they now realized the importance of studying rural problems.

More significant than problem orientation in determining the degree to which students are likely to practice a sociology which claims some intellectual and ideological freedom is the actual behavior of the students. I have already cited one example where students expressed views deviating from those in the press, suggesting a willingness to put into practice their leaders' call for ideological distance. Another indication of this willingness are the students' views on the origins for certain problems existing in their society. Although some essays and investigation reports found 'feudal remnants', past policy now officially criticized in the press (e.g. the Cultural Revolution), or the industrialization process as such responsible for current problems, others did criticize current policy. For instance, divorces in one city were seen to be due largely to the principles of housing allocation. According to this policy, housing is allocated to married couples, so that young people desiring to live away from home 'rush into' marriage without thinking the matter over carefully. Others criticized the high unemployment and crime rates in the cities as due to poor planning, and still others saw serious problems in the current policy of contracting production to households in the countryside<sup>47</sup>.

Despite this criticism, both the essays and the discussions with students revealed that there is no doubt in the minds of any of the students that socialist construction is desirable and should be the current major goal of the Party. Particularly in informal discussions, there were numerous occasions when the students asked questions about western capitalist society, or made comparisons with Chinese society today. I found it striking to note that, although many of the students expressed the wish to live in a western capitalist society as a graduate student for one or two years, they seemed convinced that in the areas 'that count', socialist society is better. Most frequently mentioned as superior were job security and a stable income, welfare for those without families or otherwise incapable of earning a living, and the possibility for women to pursue a career while also leading a satisfying family life.

Apart from these advantages, the students were also convinced of the fundamental movement of history forward, despite previous setbacks and current inadequacies of policy or policy-implementation. In this respect, they sincerely believed in the important contribution their work could make towards building socialism. Although in the main growing up in academic families, although oriented towards academic careers and interested in sociology as an academic discipline, still, these students understood sociology as a practical science preoccupied with the resolution of concrete problems. Their 'academic interest' was inseparable in their eyes from their interest in doing something meaningful for their country.

---

+) Since the time of writing, an Institute for the study of rural problems has been set up in Beijing.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

My observations at Nankai seem to indicate that the young generation of Chinese sociologists now being trained is, indeed, setting out on the path laid down for it by its leaders: it is combining a basic consensus on socialist goals with a critical examination of the specific road of development China is now taking, and it is studying 'bourgeois' sociology with a view to using it as a tool to build and strengthen Marxist sociology. In its present form therefore, sociology is being practiced in a way which should be seen as legitimate and helpful by the Party. In the long-run, however, sociology could develop in directions which might provoke Party criticism. Three characteristics of Chinese Marxist sociology as it is now defined could have this effect, namely: (1) the possibility of publishing articles in scholarly journals not directly sponsored by the Party, (2) the academic identity of the majority of sociologists, and (3) the prescription that investigations should be carried out according to the mass-line.

(1) *Scholarly journals*: As I indicated earlier, students read scholarly journals carefully, paying particular attention to the call of leading promoters of sociology to investigate certain questions or seek the origins for problems in certain phenomena. The content of the students' essays often reflected opinions presented there. It appears, therefore, that in effect, a division of labor takes place between the older and younger generations. The former defines the direction sociology should take and carries full responsibility for work carried out along these lines. The younger sociologists are then in a position to concentrate on their task without being encumbered by heavy responsibility. If the trend already evident in these journals towards an increasing extension of the latitude for social criticism continues, a wider spectrum of investigations and even more critical analyses can be expected in the future. This may provoke the Party to narrow the scope of sociological research.

(2) *Academic identity*: The background of these students indicated that they have a strong sense of commitment to scientific methods and scientific reasoning. Although they do see their academic work as inseparable from their political contribution, still this is related to the fact that the Party recognizes the scientific 'seeking of truth from facts' as a political task. Basically, these students are guided by the 'inner logic' of the discipline itself, that is, by the questions which logically arise out of prior research and analysis. At some stage, this may lead to conflict between sociologists and the authorities.

(3) *The mass-line*: The prescription of carrying out research according to the mass-line means that sociologists have close contact with the 'masses' and are expected to find concrete solutions to their problems. In research carried out so far by these students, this style has led to the establishment of close relationships of trust with the masses. Especially in the case of students filled both with idealism and the will to improve social conditions, as

these are, such relationships are important to them, and it is easy to succumb to the temptation of representing and fighting for the interests of the local population to the point of neglecting longer-term Party interests.

These characteristics, of course, need not have these effects. Rather, they merely draw attention to sensitive areas which could flare up in future relations between the political leadership and the sociologists. Even then, however, it is not likely that sociology as a discipline would be totally prohibited. More likely is a narrower delimitation of the latitude for legitimate social criticism and a reduction in the degree of intellectual autonomy now enjoyed by Chinese sociologists.

#### Notes:

- +) I would like to take the opportunity here to express my deepest gratitude to all those at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the University of Nankai who made my stay in China possible, and especially to Professors Fei Xiaotong and Wang Kang at CASS, Professor Teng Weizao, President of Nankai University, and Professors Su Tuo and Yang Xinheng at Nankai's Department of Philosophy and Sub-Department of Sociology respectively. I wish further to extend my particular thanks to the sociology students at Nankai, whose industriousness, integrity and idealism left a deep impression on me. I am also indebted to Professor Hans-Dieter Evers at the University of Bielefeld for selecting me as candidate for the exchange program in sociology, to the Free University of Berlin and particularly to Professor Kuo Heng-yü, for granting me a leave of absence during term time, and to the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) for funding a major part of the trip. Finally, I wish to thank Professors Tom Bottomore and William Outhwaite at the University of Sussex, Professor Detlef Kantowsky and two anonymous readers for their helpful comments and suggestions on this and an earlier version of this paper.
- 1) Lei Jieqiong, "Dui jiefangqian shehuixue zhuangkuang de yidian guji" (An appraisal of the situation of sociology before Liberation), *Shehui (Society)*, No. 3, 1982, p. 6.
  - 2) Of 30 respondents answering this question 18 were males and 12 females. The average age of the students was 27.8 (range: 24 to 34). More information on the students is given in section III below.
  - 3) Fei Xiaotong, "Wei shehuixue zaishuo jijuhua" (A few more words for sociology), *Shehui kexue zhanxian (The Social Science Front)*, No. 1, 1980, pp. 108-112. Here cited: pp. 108 and 110.
  - 4) *Ibid.*, p. 110.

- 5) Ibid., p. 111.
- 6) Ding Kequan, "Guanyu shehuixue neirong tixi de jianyi" (Suggestions concerning the contents of sociology), *Shehui kexue zhanxian* (The Social Science Front), No. 3, 1980, pp. 105-6.
- 7) "Lishi weiwuzhuyi yu shehuixue guanxi taolun zongshu" (Summary of discussions on the relationship between historical materialism and sociology), *Shehui* (Society), No. 3, 1982, pp. 63-4.
- 8) Ibid., p. 63.
- 9) Ibid., p. 64.
- 10) Loc. cit.
- 11) Loc. cit.
- 12) For details on Chinese sociology during this period, see Wong Suilin, *Sociology and Socialism in Contemporary China* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 1-36.
- 13) Fei, op. cit., p. 109; Lei, op. cit., p. 6; Xia Bangxin and Yu Zhen, "Fayang wo dang shehui diaocha de youliang chuantong" (Develop our Party's fine tradition of social investigation), *Shehui* (Society), May, 1982, p. 33.
- 14) Du Renzhi, "Quanmian kaizhan shehuixue yanjiu wei shehuizhuyi fuwu" (Serve socialism by developing sociology on all sides), *Shehui kexue zhanxian* (The Social Science Front), No. 1, 1980, p. 113.
- 15) Fei, op. cit., p. 109.
- 16) Ibid., p. 111.
- 17) Xia and Yu, op. cit., p. 33.
- 18) Du, op. cit., pp. 114-5; Xia and Yu, op. cit., p. 33.
- 19) Fei, op. cit., p. 111; Xia and Yu, op. cit., pp. 34-5.
- 20) Xia and Yu, op. cit., p. 34.
- 21) Ibid., p. 35.
- 22) Loc. cit.
- 23) Loc. cit. (Emphasis is mine.)
- 24) For more information on the mass-line style of social investigation, see my: "Das maoistische Verwaltungsmodell: ein nicht-bürokratischer Weg zur Verwirklichung von 'Demokratie' und 'Zentralismus'" (The Maoist administrative model: a non-bureaucratic way of realizing 'democracy' and 'centralism'), Rolf Hanisch and Rainer Tetzlaff (eds.), *Staat und Entwicklung. Studien zum Verhältnis von Herrschaft und Gesellschaft in Entwicklungsländern* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1981), pp. 351-389.

- 25) Fei, op.cit., pp. 110-1; Xia and Yu, op.cit., p. 35.
- 26) Du, op.cit., pp. 113-4; "Shehui diaocha fangfa wenti taolun zongshu" (Summary of a discussion on problems of social investigation), Shehui (Society), No. 3, 1982, p. 45.
- 27) Yan Jiaming, "Cong 'Liangang diaocha' kan shehuizhuyi shehuixue de yanjiufa" (Understanding socialist sociological research methods through the 'investigation of a steel refinery' ), Shehui (Society), No. 3, 1982, pp. 44 and 46.
- 28) Fei, op.cit., p. 111.
- 29) Du, op.cit., p. 113.
- 30) Ibid., pp. 114-5.
- 31) Ibid., p. 114.
- 32) Ibid., pp. 114-5.
- 33) Fei Xiaotong, "Guanyu shehuixue fazhan de jidian kanfa" (A few views on the development of sociology), Shehui (Society), No. 3, 1982, p. 5.
- 34) Loc.cit.
- 35) Loc.cit.
- 36) Liu Anqiu, "Jingshenbing yu shehui" (Mental illness and society), Shehui kexue zhanxian (The Social Science Front), No. 2, 1981, p. 112.
- 37) Loc.cit.
- 38) Yu Guangyuan, "Bixū zhongshi chengshi shehuixue de yanjiu" (We must attach great importance to studies in urban sociology), Shehui (Society), No. 3, 1982, p. 4.
- 39) Wang Kang, "Ji Xinanlian Daxu feng" (Remembrances of the style of work at the Xinanlian University), Jiaoyu yanjiu (Studies in Education), No. 11, 1981, pp. 74-79.
- 40) Fei Xiaotong, Fang mei lüeying (Fleeting impressions on a visit to America) (Beijing: The Three Combinations Bookstore and Publishers, 1980), p. 80.
- 41) This was also a view of Marx and not only of Mao, but it got lost in the process of 'dogmatization' of Marx's ideas into Marxism-Leninism. For details on this, see Tom Bottomore, Marxist Sociology (London/Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 53-4.
- 42) I am using the term 'critical' here quite simply to refer to the criticism of policy and social conditions caused or conditioned by policy. No association should be made with the Frankfurt school of 'critical philosophy',

which used the term to refer to its criticism of the interpretation of Marxist sociology as an empirical positivist science. Chinese Marxist sociology, as above sections have indicated, is not at all 'critical' in this latter sense. On the contrary, it insists on social science being 'scientific' in the same way as natural science is, that is, of being able to discover causal laws underlying development through the investigation of the real world.

- 43) They were then selected on the basis of a written examination.
- 44) In what follows, it will be noted that the total number of responses varies. This is due to the fact that answering these questions was voluntary.
- 45) Fei, "Wei shehuixue zaishuo jijuhua", op.cit., Point Five, p. 64.
- 46) "Shehui diaocha fangfa wenti taolun zongshu", op.cit., p.47.
- 47) I have summarized the students' views on the consequences of the household contracting system in another paper entitled "Socialist Household Production: Some Implications of the New Responsibility System in the People's Republic of China", IDS Bulletin, September 1982, Vol 13 (4): 52-59.