
ІСТОРІЯ, ФІЛОСОФІЯ, НАУКА ТА КУЛЬТУРА КИТАЮ

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POLITICS VERSUS SCHOLARSHIP: THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT AT BEIJING UNIVERSITY REVISITED, 1949–2009

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Some scholarship always regard that the Chinese intellectuals after 1949 have switched from serving their culture to serving their nation or even their Communist Party of China, their service to the nation has severely limited their intellectual and moral autonomy. Such phenomenon is particular true in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, especially in the discipline of history.

In my point of view, although the interest of the Chinese Communist government in intellectuals after 1949 is a form of somewhat manipulation, however, the role of the intellectuals is not merely the passive collaborators with the Communist Party or simply malleable servants of the ruling regime.

This article is going to take the development of the History Department at Beijing University (Beida) from 1949 to 2009 as a case study. It attempts to closely examine the evolution of the History Department in four different periods with the influence of Communist government of the People’s Republic of China, and with the increasing contacts with the foreign academic world since 1949. It intends to demonstrate this academic unit after 1949 was not merely conventionally stifling; however, many historians and researchers in the Department under Mao Zedong era were genuinely doing historical research by using the theory of Marxism, and were seeking possible limited academic autonomy. After Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, the History Department was becoming more professional and the factors of politics were being gradually withdrawn from the research milieu. Most of the professors in the Department were committed to historical research as a serious scholarly enterprise within the framework established by the regime. They did not view their role as mere propagandists, and they were not willing to subvert academic standards or distort history to serve immediate political ends.

The article will first briefly go through the history of Beida under the People’s Republic of China. Afterwards, it will individually examine the historical stages of the History

Department from 1949 to 2009 at different sections; it pays special attention to the relationships between the politics, the departmental professors, and the history curricula.

To conclude, after sixty years from the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949–2009), at the beginning of the twentieth-first century, the History Department at Beida seemed to end its long time isolation and suffocation in the pre-1978 decades, and returned to its heyday during the 1920s and 1930s. The Department looked more cosmopolitan, and the professionalization and academic autonomy quietly came back. The four decades of development has not only contributed considerably to the reform of the History Department especially in the aspects of curricula and pedagogy, but also effectively cultivated Beida's long-cherished culture of historical research and studies.

Keywords: History Department, Beijing University (Beida), historical research, China, Communism, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping.

ПОЛІТИКА ПРОТИ НАУКИ: ОГЛЯД ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ ІСТОРИЧНОГО ФАКУЛЬТЕТУ ПЕКІНСЬКОГО УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ, 1949–2009 РОКИ

Цзе Лі

Згідно з деякими дослідженнями китайські інтелектуали після 1949 року перейшли від служіння своїй культурі до служіння своїй нації чи навіть Комуністичній партії Китаю, що своєю чергою серйозно обмежило їхню інтелектуальну та моральну автономію. Таке явище особливо простежувалося в межах гуманітарних і соціальних наук, особливо в галузі історії.

На нашу думку, хоча інтерес китайського комуністичного уряду до інтелектуалів після 1949 року є певною формою маніпуляції, проте інтелектуали не просто пасивно співпрацювали з Комуністичною партією Китаю або грали роль поступливих слуг правлячого режиму.

У статті розглядається розвиток історичного факультету Пекінського університету (Бейда) з 1949 року по 2009 рік. Також зроблено спробу детально дослідити еволюцію історичного факультету в чотири різні періоди під впливом комуністичного уряду Китайської Народної Республіки та з посиленням контактів із закордонним науковим світом із 1949 року. Автор демонструє, що цей академічний підрозділ після 1949 року досить пригнічувався; однак багато істориків і дослідників факультету за часів Мао Цзедуну справді проводили історичні дослідження, використовуючи теорію марксизму, та прагнули можливої обмеженої академічної автономії. Після приходу Ден Сяопіна до влади в 1978 році історичний факультет вийшов на новий професійний рівень, а політичні фактори поступово зникли з дослідницького середовища. Учені не вважали себе пропагандистами та не бажали руйнувати академічні стандарти чи спотворювати історію, щоб відповідати безпосереднім політичним цілям.

У статті спочатку коротко розглядається історія Бейда із часів Китайської Народної Республіки. Після цього окремо представлені етапи розвитку факультету історії з 1949 року по 2009 рік у різних секціях; особлива увага приділяється зв'язкам між політикою, викладачами та навчальними програмами з історії.

Підсумовуючи, зауважимо, що після 60 років від заснування Китайської Народної Республіки (1949–2009 роки), на початку ХХІ століття, історичний факультет Бейда, здавалося би, закінчив свою тривалу ізоляцію та задуху, яка тривала до 1978 року й повернулася до свого розквіту, як у 1920-х – 1930-х роках. Факультет став більш космополітичним, професійним та академічно автономним. Чотири десятиліття розвитку не тільки зробили значний внесок у реформу факультету, особливо в аспектах навчальних програм і педагогіки, але й ефективно культивували давню культуру історичних досліджень Бейда.

Ключові слова: факультет історії, Пекінський університет (Бейда), історичні дослідження, Китай, комунізм, Мао Цзедун, Ден Сяопін.

Introduction

Some scholarship always regard that the Chinese intellectuals after 1949 have switched from serving their culture to serving their nation or even their Communist Party of China, their service to the nation has severely limited their intellectual and moral autonomy [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987]. Such phenomenon is particular true in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, especially in the discipline of history, which is one of the most politically sensitive academic areas under the Communist regime. As C.T. Hu points out: “My own inquiry into the teaching of history in the People’s Republic of China up to the mid-1960s seems to confirm the view that ideological orthodoxy has taken precedence over historical scholarship” [Hu 1969, 1].

To some extent, the abovementioned analyses are not without credibility, as Chinese intellectuals, who historically inherited from both traditions of Confucianism and Daoism, have ranged from unquestioning government service through critical remonstrance to total withdrawal from public life. However, in imperial China the intellectuals’ participation in mundane politics was limited, as the rigid recruitment mechanism of Civil Service Examination, and their purpose of criticism was to improve the prevailing system, not to replace or undermine it. In the modern era, because the governments of Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and Guomindang (Republican China) regime (1911–1949) were engulfed in foreign imperialist invasions and domestic chaos, so the intellectuals could achieve some degree of autonomy. Particularly in the late 1930s to the early 1940s, when China was swallowed up by the Japanese invasion, as John Israel demonstrates, the professors at the wartime institution of Southwestern United University (*Xinan lianda* 西南聯大) did enjoy the academic freedom which was unprecedented in the history of China before, and could only be rivaled by their Western colleagues after the Second World War [Israel 1998, 385].

But in China there is a norm that when the state is weak and the people may bear more self-esteem, personal liberty, as well as professional autonomy. However, when the state is strong and centralized, people’s freedom is highly circumscribed, particularly for that of the restive element of intellectuals. After the founding of the People’s Republic China (further – PRC) in October 1949 and the short-lived “honeymoon” period between the state and the intellectuals in the 1950s. Beginning with the ambiguous “Hundred Flowers” campaign in 1956, Chinese Communist Party (further – CCP) leader Mao Zedong and his disciples decided to decimate the dissidents as a whole within the country, and required all the intellectuals to be submitted to the Party. Since then, Chinese intellectuals totally kept silent and no longer bore the title of “doctors to society” like their predecessors [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 3].

After the death of Mao and the new chairman Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, China started to take a new step toward “openness and reform”. However, as M. Goldman, T. Cheek and C.L. Hamrin concern, the post-Mao Communist regime are based on utilizing the technocratic professions, this tendency is to give more leeway to scientists and economists than to the nonscientific, humanistic professions [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 6]. As the authors continue:

They call for a degree of ideological pluralism and a variety of views, but within the context of the system and its ideological framework. Unlike some dissidents

in the USSR, they criticize the shortcomings of the system, but do not criticize the system itself, at least publicly [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 7].

In my point of view, although the interest of the CCP in intellectuals after 1949 is a form of somewhat manipulation, however, the role of the intellectuals is not merely the passive collaborators with the Party or simply malleable servants of the ruling regime. At the beginning of the 1950s, for the sake of consolidation of the newborn People's Republic, the CCP needed to win the trust from the intellectuals and allowed them to express their views more freely, for their better cooperation with the state. During the "Hundred Flowers" campaign in 1956 and again in 1961 and 1962, many intellectuals demanded the right to practice their professions without political interference, as well as criticized the coercive ruling method of the Communist government. Although they were the social and political atrocities in nature, however, to some extent, both of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) were also periods of academic decentralization in China. Most of the intellectuals during these turbulent decades were either silenced at home, or sent to the prison camps, punitive solitary confinement, and countryside to participate in manual labor. They were no longer kept in the Party establishments, but given a chance to think and read freely in wilderness. These experiences in exile gave the Chinese intellectuals a spirit of critical thinking in reflection on the whole socialist system. After Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, the disentanglement of scholarship from political intervention and the opening up to the outside world encouraged the intellectuals' increasing forthrightness in criticism of communist orthodoxies, despite the Party repression continued. As Merle Goldman, Timothy Cheek and Carol Lee Hamrin define, the roles of Chinese intellectuals after 1949 are not only ideological spokesmen, professional and academic elite, but also critical thinkers, and a number of them have rotated among their roles at different times in their careers [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 1].

The research rationality of this article is going to take the development of the History Department at Beijing University (Beida) from 1949 to 2009 as a case study, and it intends to demonstrate this academic unit after 1949 was not merely conventionally stifling; however, many historians and researchers in the Department under Mao Zedong era were genuinely doing historical research by using the theory of Marxism, and were seeking possible limited academic autonomy. After Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, the History Department was becoming more professional and the factors of politics were being gradually withdrawn from the research milieu. Most of the professors in the Department were both historians and bureaucrats; however, they were committed to historical research as a serious scholarly enterprise within the framework established by the regime. They did not view their role as mere propagandists, and they were not willing to subvert academic standards or distort History to serve immediate political ends.

Regarding the research sources, except the official website of the History Department at Beida, the paucity of materials may hamper this work to some extent. However, some scholarships, guidebooks, and a number of relevant articles that have appeared in various newspapers and periodicals, are available to assist this inquiry. Both of the works produced by M. Goldman, T. Cheek and C.L. Hamrin (1987), as well as written by C.T. Hu (1969), have given me an insight into the roles played by the Chinese intellectuals in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences

after 1949. On the other hand, two books written by and paid tribute to Chairman Jian Bozan in the History Department at Beida tell many inside stories of the departmental historians under Mao era (1962 and 1986). The encyclopedia edited by Zhang Guoyou about the outlook in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Beida has presented to me a detailed description of the history curriculum (both undergraduate and postgraduate) from 1949 onwards (2008). I also found out three books located in the Hong Kong Public Libraries are helpful [Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong 1998; Guo Weidong and Niu Dayong 2004; Wang Chunmei and Wang Meixiu 2007], they relate many stories in the History Department at Beida which are unknown previously.

The article will first briefly go through the history of Beida under the People's Republic of China, as the development of the History Department after 1949 at this University will be placed in this context. Afterwards, the paper will individually examine the historical stages of the History Department from 1949 to 2009 at different sections; it pays special attention to the relationships between the politics, the departmental professors, and the history curricula.

Will increasing specialization, professionalization, and contact with outside world gradually change the environments? Will a small number of Chinese intellectuals whose commitment to knowledge and conscience continue to override their commitment to any political regime? Will History become a truly independent discipline free of any political harassment in the future in China? These the questions to which the article will address.

The history of Beida, 1949–2009

The history of Beijing University in the People's Republic decades is subject to the turbulence of the politics, with a mixed legacy. Before the establishment of the communist state in October, the CCP had taken over the Beijing University on February 28, 1949. The CCP reorganized the management of Beida, installed the Party cells and members into every corner of the University, reformed the curricula by adding many Marxism courses, as well as controlled the property right of the whole institution.

After the outbreak of the Korean War and the first military conflict between the Chinese Communist regime and the American government in 1950, Beida became the target of attack by the CCP, as back then most of the teaching personnel there had been educated in the West and particularly in the US universities. Mao Zedong, the paramount Chinese Communist Party leader then, decided to launch the "Thought Reform" movement in the wake of the Korean War, for the sake of eradicating the "capitalist elements and imperialist espionage" in the country, and Beida's faculties were heavily demoralized by this political campaign. In the meanwhile, many Beida students and professors suffered from countless political meetings and brainwashing campaigns, in order to reform their thoughts and behaviors, as well as to cultivate the pro-Soviet and anti-American feeling.

Beida embarked on another nationwide thoroughgoing organizational and academic reform movement at the end of 1952 – "The Reorganization of Institutions and Departments" or "Reorganization" (*yuanxi tiaozheng* 院系調整). Apart from reforming China's curriculum structure according to the Russian textbooks, the movement of "Reorganization" was to physically transform the outlook of Chinese universities and colleges based on the Soviet model, including the restructuring

and reshuffling of institutional administration and faculties, as well as the geographical relocation of many tertiary schools across the country. For Beida, it had to be incorporated with many academic departments from other universities. Afterwards, Beida became a comprehensive research university with concentration in the Humanities and Social Sciences, while most of its faculties of Technology and Sciences were transferred to Qinghua University. On the other hand, Beida's undergraduate students' total number increased from 2 752 in 1949 to 7 830 in the middle of the 1950s, the teaching personnel from 319 to 1 210, and the graduate students from 65 to 357 respectively [Lü Lin 1989, 91].

During the stormy period of "Hundred Flowers" movement in 1956, when Party Chairman Mao Zedong insincerely asked the Chinese intellectuals to criticize the Party and the state, so the Beida professors and students, who had inherited the legacy of spirit of criticism from their "May Fourth" predecessors in the 1910s, spearheaded the large scale of demonstrations and verbal attacks to the CCP. Mao understood perfectly that was the ripe time to catch this opportunity and to purge these "poisonous weeds". He immediately announced the demise of "Hundred Flowers" and launched the "Anti-Rightist" campaign in 1957. During this campaign, Beida once again suffered a great deal, many teaching personnel and students were tortured in labor camps, exiled in remote China, and even killed in the prisons [MacFarquhar 1960, 122–126]. Since then, Beida no longer enjoyed the freedom of academic research and speech as it did under the Republican China (1910–1949), rather, it entered the era of suffocation, traumas, and terror, in which the Communists were able to impose unprecedented restraint upon this liberal academy. However, Beida from 1957 to 1965 at least enjoyed a relatively quiet and stable period until the Cultural Revolution started in 1966, which totally turned Beida into a chaotic place that had never happened in the history of the University before.

During the political hurricane of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Beida was totally shut down; almost all of the professors virtually lost the jobs and were exiled to the countryside or prison camps, such as the notorious "May Fourth" cadre schools. Many Beida students participated in the Red Guard movement and travelled around the country free of charge, in order to exchange the "revolutionary experiences". In the early 1970s, while the wave of the Cultural Revolution subsided, Mao Zedong saw no more political value of the university students, he then required almost all of the Chinese youth go "up to the mountain and down the earth", in order to relieve the urban employment pressure, rather than to leave the rusticated young people congregated in the cities idly. Up to the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, not only Beida, but all the Chinese higher educational institutions were in disarray. The normality was not restored until the return of Deng Xiaoping in 1978.

Beida during the reform era (1978 to present) is the testimony of Deng Xiaoping's "open door" policy. The University started to reform its outdated curricula under Mao's rule, and more importantly, it began to establish the international academic relations with universities outside China, as well as recruited many teaching personnel who have attained the overseas credentials. Except the fixed and immutable status of no democracy and no freedom in research and speech, particularly in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, Beida today looks more like the one in its heyday during the 1920s and 1930s.

Politics in ascension, 1949–1957

After the consolidation period from 1949 to 1951, in 1952 when the higher educational system in China learned from the Soviet Union in the form of “Reorganization”, the undergraduate study period in the Department of History at Beida, like elsewhere in China, was changed from four years to five years. Besides, three history departments from Beida, Qinghua, and Yanjing universities were amalgamated into one History Department at Beijing University in 1953 [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 24]. However, such rearrangement did not yield a good result, as those departments before 1949 all considered themselves to be the number one in China and nobody was willing to listen to others’ opinions [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 24–25]. The newly appointed Department Head and the former Vice-President of Beida Jian Bozan, who was a Uyghur origin and anti-sectarianism, took such heavy challenge to conciliate the conflicts between the three history departments after 1952. Eventually, Jian was successful in making the new History Department at Beida a united body [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 25].

Since the early 1950s, many history professors at Beida, including Jian Bozan, Xiang Da, Zhao Wanli, Deng Guangming, Zhou Yiliang, and Shao Xunzheng, disagreed the higher educational reform along the Soviet line and were sad about the outcome of “Reorganization”. They even found chance to speak to the Communist leader Mao Zedong directly about their dissatisfaction of Chinese higher educational reform along the Soviet line in the 1950s, which was to develop the Science and Engineering majors but at the expense of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The professors particularly concerned that after the 1950s, the history curricula at Beida concentrated too much on dynastic history (*duandaishi* 斷代史), but not on general or comprehensive history (*tongshi* 通史), as this could not have inculcated a good knowledge about history in students [Guo Weidong and Niu Dayong 2004, 8].

Although the “Reorganization” and the curriculum reform along the Soviet template seemed to have a negative effect on the History Department at Beida, however, the Department under Jian Bozan’s leadership in the 1950s and early 1960s nevertheless did achieve a remarkable deal in academic level. In 1952 Jian was willing to shoulder all the blame and approved the major of Archeology in the History Department, as well as supervised the establishment of the Classical Philology major in the Chinese Language Department [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 3]. In 1954 the History Department also created the Research Center for Asian Histories (*yazhoushi jiaoyanshi* 亞洲史教研室), the first of such academic facility among all the Chinese universities after 1949 [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 4]. Furthermore, unlike many other history professors in China then, who might fear the political misfortune and did not dare to teach the courses of Western history. In 1963 Jian Bozan and other Beida history professors took a great courage to establish the major of World History at Beida – the first History Department in China to open such specialty after 1949. Jian even went further: For the World History major, he suggested hiring not only the Soviet professors but also some scholars from the capitalist countries to come to Beida to teach, and such proposal was considered to be too radical at that time. Obviously, Jian’s plan could not be materialized and this became the excuse for his downfall in the following decade [The Department of History at Beijing

University 1986, 4]. Besides, Jian and his co-workers in the Department always travelled outside China even in the highly isolated period after the Korean War in 1950, by visiting other universities in the Western world to give the seminars on Chinese history, such as the visit to the Leiden University in the Netherlands in 1955, the University of Paris in France in 1956, and Kyoto University in Japan in 1957 [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 249]. Jian was purged and subsequently killed during the Cultural Revolution. Nonetheless, before the mid-1960s, the History Department at Beida had already claimed three majors for its undergraduate curricula: Chinese History, World History, and Archeology – the most diverse history-related majors among all the PRC universities then.

Politics in command, 1958–1976

Both the periods of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1961) and Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) had been a tremendous calamity for Beida and its History Department. This article will still discuss the two decades of both the Great Leap Forward (further – GLF) and Cultural Revolution as one coherent period during which the same radical goals were pursued with only a brief interruption immediately following the GLF.

As M. Goldman, T. Cheek and C.L. Hamrin argue, there were several trends regarding to the historical scholarship during the GLF: “First, the range of historical interpretation and debate was greatly reduced, and Marxist historical categories were more narrowly understood and mechanically applied. In addition, the authority of Mao’s Thought was given extraordinary emphasis. Second, historical subject matter and interpretation were placed in the service of current political needs, as historians were to become little more than propagandists for the regime. Their responsibility was to write history that not only addressed itself to contemporary issues but also legitimized current policies, mobilized support for the GLF, and undermined Mao’s political opposition. The third dimension was anti-intellectual in its demand that historians “leave the ivory tower”, “learn from the masses”, and become directly involved in socialist construction. What this meant in practice was that historians were to go to factories and communes to write their histories. The goal of the movement was to push the Marxist historical establishment in a radical Maoist direction. This process of politicization, however, ruptured the accommodation that had been reached between the Party-state and its historians” [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 70–71].

Given one example, during the GLF, the curricula in the History Department at Beida took great care about the contemporary issues but downplayed ancient Chinese historical questions, and such trend was related to the political situation then and Mao Zedong’s revolutionary call for disregarding the antiquated affairs. As Jian Bozan indicated in his essay, the History Department had eleven major courses, but only two of them were concerning ancient China, compared to the pre-1959 of five. And the percentage of ancient Chinese courses was down from pre-1959 of 50% to 30% [Jian Bozan 1962, 51].

However, most of the history professors at Beida tried to reverse the utopian educational mandate. They repudiated the radical policy slogans, and insisted historiography as the only one legitimate academic guideline, although within the Marxist theoretical framework. They wrote many articles that ran counter to the purposes and spirit of the GLF mobilization, and dissented from the Maoist view that historians must leave the ivory tower and mix up with the masses to fulfill their social functions [Jian Bozan 1962, 91].

During the unrest of the GLF, professors always warned their fellow colleagues and students in the History Department at Beida, that they should not be affected by so many political and social fanfares outside the campus; rather, they must live in seclusion to devote themselves to purely academic inquiries. So it was not surprising to see, the History Department during the GLF still maintained its distinction of scholarly excellence, by contributing many valuable publications in several prestigious academic journals [Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong 1998, 42].

During the heyday of the GLF, some professors even dared to challenge communist orthodoxy with impunity. Like Zhao Wanli, who had written an essay of “Several Problems regarding to Current History Teaching”, in which he continued to defend his opinion and sincerely argued with the general public that they should treat historical study with mercy. Another example was Jian Bozan, he went further to oppose Mao Zedong’s personal secretary Chen Boda’s superficial and insubstantial slogan of “*houjin pogu*” (厚今薄古 focusing on the present and downplaying the past), and described Chen’s theory as empty as well as abstruse [Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong 1998, 48].

After a tranquil interlude (1962–1965) in the wake of the GLF, in another political restiveness – the Cultural Revolution, the hallmark of this period for the historical scholarship were all kinds of ambiguous slogans devoid of substance, such as “Emphasize the present, deemphasize the past”, “Ancient for the use of the present”, “Use the class struggle viewpoint to explain history”, “Put politics out in front”, “Politics takes command”, “Theory takes command”, and “Lead history with theory”, etc. It means, Mao Zedong and other radical political leaders demanded that historians, in effect, become little more than propagandists for the radical goals and values of the movement.

As M. Goldman, T. Cheek and C.L. Hamrin point out: “The GLF and the Cultural Revolution eliminating “bourgeois” historiography, replacing the dynasty-centered traditional history of China with a comprehensive “general history” of China written in Marxist categories, and carrying out a thorough ideological remolding of historians. The injunction added in the GLF and Cultural Revolution, to “put history in the service of politics”, pointed to a very different set of goals than those of the early 1950s. The major objectives, as described in a Cultural Revolution account, were to bring about a “revolutionization in the ranks of historical-study workers” and a “violent revolutionary movement in the study of history”. It was a drive for the total politicization of historical scholarship and the professional life of historians” [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 69–70].

However, in this political purgatory, the professors in the History Department at Beida were once again in the front line to push back the attack from the fanatics who knew nothing about academic studies. Some of them published articles to criticize the subjectivism, dogmatism, nihilism, ultra-leftism, and absolutism in historical research, and pointed out that many people had misused or abused the concept of Marxism [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 7]. Some of them strongly opposed the use of historical research as a tool of insinuation for personal or political attack, or the use of classical allusions to imply the present situation, which were very common in Mao’s days, and they regarded those were anti-historicism and were nothing to do with academic research [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 16]. For example, during the early stage of

the Cultural Revolution, Jian Bozan refused the pressure from the “Gang of Four”, to criticize the historical play of “The Dismissed of Hairui” written by Wu Han, an old friend of Jian [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 27]. In the later days of the Cultural Revolution, one young historian in Beida criticized the abuse of Marxism by another famous orthodox historian Fan Wenlan and PRC cultural tsar Zhou Yang, for their inhuman attack to his academic colleagues in the History Department [The Department of History at Beijing University 1986, 28].

Almost all of the history professors at Beida were outspoken in objecting to the slogans of “Everything is going to serve the politics” (*yiqie wei zhengzhi fuwu* – 切為政治服務) as well as “Using the past serving the present” (*guwei jinyong* 古為今用). These professors thought that the academic matters should be neutral with the political matters, and they always sincerely persuaded the young historians and history students at Beida, that they should not apply the past mechanically to the present without considering the specific circumstances in ancient China [Wang Chunmei and Wang Meixiu 2007, 58–59].

However, the above-mentioned attitudes of the truth-defenders were turned out to be an excuse for attacking them during the Cultural Revolution, and all became the evidence of guilty in the late Mao Zedong era. Although this political farce mocked and afflicted them with great sufferings, those scholars did not retreat and were still holding the truth until the day they died to demonstrate the everlasting spirit of Beida [Guo Weidong and Niu Dayong 2004, 37–48].

Scholarship revived, 1978–1997

After 1978, the Deng Xiaoping regime’s reforms in historical scholarship had contributed to the relaxation of political control over history writing and research, and the opportunities for Chinese scholars to communicate with foreign colleagues and to travel abroad were greater than at any previous periods in PRC history.

As C.T. Hu argues: “The Party’s leadership had sponsored a wide range of projects on Party and national history, opened the pages of official Party newspapers and journals to academic debate on historical topics by recognized experts, and regularly published reports on the activities of professional historians. In addition, the regime had rehabilitated prominent historians, editors, and cultural bureaucrats purged during the Cultural Revolution, supported the proliferation of specialized historical journals, and removed many of the taboos that have long plagued research and publishing in the humanistic sciences. The regime’s effort to foster respect for scholarly history had been matched by an equally vigorous initiative to promote mass education in history as a means of regenerating Chinese national pride and redeeming the Party’s popular image in the wake of the Cultural Revolution” [Hu 1969, 92].

After 1978, the vitality of teaching and research in the History Department at Beida began to revive. In 1982 it was ranked as number one among all the history departments in mainland China in terms of its teaching quality and academic excellence [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 22]. The Educational Commission of China (*guojia jiaowei* 國家教委) granted the right for the History Department to award the MA and the PhD degree in 1983 and 1988 respectively [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 23]. Besides, the Department had established ten new research centers, for examples, in 1984 it built up the world’s first Research Center for Chinese Archaic and Medieval Histories (*zhongguo zhonggushi yanjiu zhongxin* 中國中古史研究中心). In 1983,

Archeology was separated from the History Department and formed an independent academic department [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 24].

During the reform decades, the History Department at Beida undertook a great deal in the reform of undergraduate curricula. The undergraduate studies in the History Department are divided into two majors: Chinese History and World History. The history graduates at Beida were expected to work in the sectors of education, culture, research, policy making, and propaganda upon graduation. During their study, the students should learn to use the theory of Marxism and Leninism, as well as the principle of dialectical materialism, to analyze the problems and developments in both Chinese and world histories [Liu Lejian 1988, 152].

For the Chinese History Major, the compulsory courses are: 1) Ancient Chinese History (the histories of Qin, Han, Jin, South and North Dynasties, Sui, Tang, Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing); 2) Modern Chinese History; 3) Contemporary Chinese History; 4) World History (Ancient Period); 5) World History (Medieval Period); 6) Modern European and American History; 7) Contemporary European and American History; 8) Selected Reading in Historical Documents, etc.

The selective courses (both restricted and non-restricted) are: Historiography; paleography; archaeology; history of Chinese literature; modern non-western history; contemporary non-western history; cold war history; ancient Chinese land policies; legal history of Tang Dynasty; the political institutions of Sui and Tang Dynasties; special topic in the histories of Qin and Han Dynasties; special topic in the history of Song Dynasty; special topic in the history of Yuan Dynasty; special topic in the history of Ming Dynasty; special topic in the history of Qing Dynasty; the history of Xinhai Revolution; modern Chinese political institutions; international relations [Liu Lejian 1988, 153].

For the World History major, the compulsory courses include: Ancient world history; medieval world history; Modern European and American History; Contemporary European and American History; modern non-western history; contemporary non-western history; ancient Chinese history; modern Chinese history; contemporary Chinese history, etc. The selective courses (both restricted and non-restricted) are: Western historiography; cold war history; history of Renaissance; economic history of Europe; history of imperialism; history of fascism; international relations; modern America; Modern Britain; modern France; modern Germany; history of Soviet Union; history of Japan [Liu Lejian 1988, 153].

Besides, all the undergraduate students must complete the courses of Marxism and Leninism, Mao Zedong's Thoughts, and Deng Xiaoping's Theories, as well as Physical Education. Plus the assigned field works of social investigations, two foreign languages proficiency beside Chinese, and the final thesis within the four-year study period [Liu Lejian 1988, 154].

The graduation requirement for BA honor degree is that every student should attain at least 145 credits and of these at least 100 is compulsory courses, 20 for restricted selective courses, and 25 for non-restricted selective courses. Apart from the history-related majors, the undergraduate students are required to take courses outside the Department, such as politics, economics, and the international relations. And they are expected to attend the different colloquia and seminars scheduled for the whole academic year. After 1978, the Department had embarked an innovative

curriculum reform in order to meet the international standard and market orientation, such as computer-aid teaching and multimedia demonstrations; the internet-based education had been proportionately increased [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 27]. However, as C.T. Hu points out, in China the weight given to history in colleges and universities and the number of history courses required of students thus vary according to the students' field of specialization; those who specialize in history have the heaviest requirements while those studying the humanities, pure sciences, and applied sciences have progressively fewer. Based on the abovementioned curriculum description, what Hu says is nothing but true [Hu 1969, 3].

In the Deng Xiaoping era, although some history professors at Beida still upheld the argument that Marxism is a correct way in handling the historical research. But the demand for professional autonomy and the call for a freer world without much political control, however limited, would still incur the tension between the Party and the professional historians, between political norms and professional standards, particularly after the June Fourth Tiananmen Incident occurred in 1989.

As C.T. Hu observes: "Historians have responded to the new liberal atmosphere by openly repudiating the severe political control of the past and by pushing hard for a more limited role for politics in guiding historical scholarship. While it acknowledged that history "as a Social Sciences" should "serve a certain kind of politics", it nevertheless implicitly endorsed those comrades who rejected the dictum "serve proletarian politics" because of past abuses committed in its name <...> The current liberalization appears broader in scope, deeper in thrust, and longer in duration than any previous such period in PRC history. The Dengist political framework affords new opportunities for historians to pursue their craft in a more professional environment. But even the limited professional autonomy envisioned by Jian Bozan, based on an explicit understanding between the regime and historians and enforced through legitimate institutional mechanisms, seems unlikely in the short term. The concept of historicism – where to draw the boundaries between history and politics – remains relevant and unanswered in Dengist China. Perhaps it cannot be answered as long as China remains a Leninist party-state" [Hu 1969, 97].

Scholarship in ascendancy, 1998–2009

After Deng Xiaoping died and China entered the post-Deng era after 1997, the outlook and substance of the History Department at Beida were changing more conspicuously than ever before. Since the late 1990s, the History Department has eight academic subdivisions: Ancient Chinese history; modern and contemporary Chinese history; world history; historiography; special history; geographical history; paleography; archaeology and the study of museum [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 20]. And according to the official documents, the following subjects are the research strength in the History Department at Beida [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 338–340]:

- Pre-Modern Chinese History: the histories of Qin, Han, Jin, South and North Dynasties, Sui, Tang, Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing;
- Modern and Contemporary Chinese History;
- World History: ancient world history; medieval world history; modern non-western history; contemporary non-western history; modern America; Modern Britain; modern France; modern Germany; history of Soviet Union; history of Japan.

The Department had full time teaching faculty of sixty-five persons, and thirty-four of them were ranked as professors. Unlike under Mao Zedong era, when the

Department only possessed the professors who were self-taught, or who had attained the BA or MA degrees in China or in Soviet Union. Since 2000, among the history faculty forty-seven of them are around the age of forty, and about 86% of them have PhD degrees from China and the Western countries. The most notable persons in this Department were five academics who were the members of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the First Class National Scholars (*changjiang xuezhe* 長江學者) [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 22].

Unlike other history departments in mainland China, which are under strict funding circumstances and subject to limited research opportunities, due to the profit-oriented economic reform after 1978. Conversely, the History Department in Beida is financially care-free since 2001, as it has been granted many projects by the Chinese ministries. Most of these projects are practical oriented, such as the histories of local development and of economic construction, and almost all of the faculty members are invited to participate. The Department had attained funding total of more than one hundred million Chinese yuans from 2001 to 2007, and its teaching and research personnel had published 696 articles and 143 books during this period [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 26].

Since 2000, the History Department has collaborated with other academic units in Beida to launch many frontier and cutting-edged disciplines, such as “European Study” and “Greek Study” (with the Center of European Study), “Asia-Pacific Study” (with the School of Asia-Pacific), “Confucian Study” (with other departments), and “Korean Study” (with National Seoul University in Korea Republic). Many research centers at Beida are also affiliated with the History Department, such as “Asia-Africa Research Center”, “Social Development Research Center”, “Research Center for International Relations”, “Research Center for Russian and Slavic Study”, “Research Center for Canadian Study”, “Research Center for Japanese Study”, “Research Center for American Study”, “Research Center for Modern World”, “Research Center for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan”, “Research Center for Australian Study”, etc. [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 28].

Once the undergraduates in the History Department fulfill all the graduation requirements and they will be conferred the 4-year Honors Bachelor Degree. However, if they are unable to complete all the courses within four years (both history and non-history courses), and they could apply to retake twice but are required to pay the extra fees, but if they fail again and they will only be granted the graduation certificates, not the bachelor degrees. All Beijing University undergraduates (including those in the History Department) must complete and fulfill all the courses requirements within seven years in order to be awarded the bachelor degree [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 145].

The History Department every year accepts 36 and 40 PhD and Master students respectively; the normative full time study for PhD is four years and three for Master. The graduate study training in the Department is research oriented. In addition to the required courses for graduate students stipulated by the University, such as three credits of Marxist and Socialist course work, at least 160 hours teaching work per year (two credits), and before 1996, the one-week physical labor work (non-credit). Besides, every graduate student must pass the departmental requirements of course works, comprehensive exams, research proposal submission, thesis writing, and the oral defense. Since 2001, the Department requires every PhD student must publish at

least two academic articles in the nation-wide renown journals before they graduate, and one such article for MA students [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 408].

Apart from the undergraduate and graduate courses, the History Department also opens the 3-year collegiate level course in history major, except the shortening academic period, the curriculum design is very similar to that of the undergraduate. The collegiate course is run in the weekend and at night, sometimes even in the form of corresponding course [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 411].

Even in today's Beida, although the required non-history courses (mainly referring to those political indoctrinations, which are the hallmark of school curricula in mainland China) are far less than those in the Mao Zedong era, however, the requirements are still very strict and substantial for every undergraduate, and below it is a list of such courses [Liu Lejian 1988, 69–70]:

1. Political and Moral Educational Courses:
 - a) The History of Chinese Revolution (3 credits);
 - b) Philosophy (4 credits);
 - c) The Theory of Capitalism (2 credits);
 - d) Chinese Socialism (2 credits);
 - e) World's Political Economy and International Relations (2 credits);
 - f) Contemporary Society (2 credits).
2. Education of National Defense and Military Trainings (2 credits).
3. Foreign Language Studies (14 credits).
4. Physical Education (4 credits).
5. Information Technology (6 credits).
6. Any Courses outside the Faculty of Arts (4 credits).

However, it should be noted that many of the non-history courses at Beida today are no longer radical and revolutionary in essence, and have little to do with utopian ideal and class struggle, which characterized the higher education under Mao's rule. The design of most of these courses now are practical and contemporary oriented, as well as moderate and diverse in outlook and content, and parallel to the national policy of "openness and reform".

Since 1999, almost all of the universities in China no longer assist the graduates to find jobs and leave this responsibility to the students themselves, the elite institutions like Beida is no exception. However, unlike other history departments in China, where their graduates will normally face a very serious employment problem, the History Department at Beida seems to have no such problem at all. According to a recent survey, most of the history graduates will become national elites after leaving Beida, some of them joint the government units, some turned out to be enterprise managers, others found jobs in universities and research institutions, some of them even became state leaders. As the prestige of Beida, many offspring of former Chinese Communist Party leaders were attract to have studied in the History Department before, such as Li Na (daughter of the former Party Chairman Mao Zedong) and Hu Dezun (son of the former Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang), etc. [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 29].

Since 1949, the History Department has been actively involved in international academic cooperation and exchanges. It has established the exchanged programs with more than 40 institutions from a dozens of countries, such as the UK, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, and Canada. Every year, the Department hosts

lectures from hundreds of international well-known historians, among them are academic celebrities such as Jonathan Spence, Roderick MacFarquhar, and Marianne Bastid-Bruguere, etc. In addition, the Department greets more than 40 foreign students per year; most of them are research students and coming here for furnishing their dissertations and projects. And the Department also has sent hundreds of its students to study abroad for short-term period. Through such worldwide participation, the Department has had sufficient funding support from all kinds of bodies. In 2005, the Department established a “Joint Doctoral Program in World History” with London School of Economics and Social Sciences (LSE), and it is the first such international cooperated PhD program in the Faculty of Arts among all the Chinese peers [Zhang Guoyou 2008, 23].

Conclusions

The story of the History Department at Beida after 1949 is the best illustration of twist and turn, ebb and flow of the scholarship of Humanities in this communist regime. In the early 1950s, when Jian Bozan was in charge of the History Department, though many historians at Beida were genuine and committed Marxists, they were not ossifying persons in ideology, and did not view their role as mere propagandists, and they were not willing to subvert academic standards or distort history to serve immediate political ends [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 67–68].

Even history professors at other Chinese universities submitted to the Party authority, therefore submerged their own opinions but saved their political fates by hiding their individual arguments which might get trouble in the political heyday of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, Beida historians still refused to acknowledge that Marxism should replace the evidential research method in historical enquiry, and thought that Marxism must always apply to the Chinese situation. They persistently regarded that history is science, not political ideology.

After Mao Zedong died and Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, through the sea change of curricula and research, the History Department at Beida no longer solely emphasized on political indoctrination, thought remolding, or ideological correctness, but wholeheartedly embraced the cultural heritage of China as well as the cultural achievements of foreign nations. The CCP after 1978 also allows the open expression of diverse views and proposed the elimination of “forbidden zones” in historical research. However, almost half a century later the Communist Party in China still towers over daily life, including the historical scholarship. The censorship prevails, and the national policy of “openness and reform” is viewed more as window-dressing than as the home of freedom.

As M. Goldman, T. Cheek and C.L. Hamrin write: “No matter how enlightened the leaders are or how much freedom they may grant intellectuals at a given time, so long as intellectuals do not have legally protected freedom, leadership can withdraw that “freedom” whenever it believes necessary” [Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987, 19].

After sixty years from the founding of the People’s Republic of China (1949–2009), at the beginning of the twentieth-first century, the History Department at Beida seemed to end its long time isolation and suffocation in the pre-1978 decades, and returned to its heyday during the 1920s and 1930s. The Department looked more cosmopolitan, and the professionalization and academic autonomy quietly came back. The slogan was no longer “politics in command”, but “scholarship in

ascendancy”. While the History Department looking forward to the future, although a long time of torment, sacrifice, and dire hardship had been imposed on in the past; in 2009 and beyond, the increasing contact with the outside world, the relax control of the politics, and the everlasting spirit of freedom and democracy in scholarship, these were factors on which optimists could seize.

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