

Choe attended the 1956 Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Following that, Brezhnev attended the Third Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, but in the buildup towards the outbreak of the August Faction Incident, the pro-China faction within the party began to play a central role in the plan to expel Kim under the auspices of 'cult personality' critique. In that regard, it can be inferred that the pro-China faction acted independently of China's wishes, and went into action after informing the Soviet Union's Embassy.

On the other hand, if we observe the actions of Moscow at the end of 1955, it is clear to see that they by no means welcomed the actions of the pro-China faction. Kovyshenko, despite entering Pyongyang together with Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai (it was precisely because of this, that he didn't touch upon the Japanese-Soviet peace treaty negotiations at the time), felt that Kim Il-sung had strengthened his hold over the party. China's image (including that of Peng) was not good at the time in Pyongyang.

Amidst all of this, the revolts in Eastern Europe broke out, forcing China and the Soviet Union to put the North Korea issue on the backburner and deal with the crisis of the demise of Communist Party authority. Furthermore, in 1957, the rebel plot to oust Khrushchev in Moscow failed, and instead, Khrushchev purged top politburo members including Molotov and Bulganin. In the following year, Khrushchev also took on the role of prime minister, and by this stage the Soviet Union's theoretical basis for criticising Kim Il-sung's 'personality cult' and furthermore its clout in Pyongyang had dissipated.

Second Session: *The General Public, Groups and the State*

Letters Written by Citizens of Contemporary China and Their Accompanying Characteristics: A First Attempt at a Research Methodology

ZHANG Letian (Fudan University)

1. On gathering materials relating to life within contemporary Chinese society

After Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, rural Chinese areas headed down the path of agricultural collectivization. This brought with it the need to record in-depth information on the production and distribution of several hundred million peasants. China also experienced the unfolding of multiple political movements, leaving in their wake a vast number of written materials including self-criticisms and confessions.

These two factors led to China becoming the country with the largest stock of non-governmental materials. However, for a variety of reasons, materials which offer us an insight into the lives of everyday Chinese people had hitherto not been collated, let alone utilized for the purpose of academic research.

After Deng's reforms, the combined effect of the dismantling of the people's commune system and the rapid development of Chinese economy and society led to a vast number of these materials being lost or sent to be used in paper mills.

From 1988 on, this author began to collate materials on China's rural areas, focusing mainly on materials hailing from Lianmincun in Northern Zhejiang and its surrounding areas. To this author's knowledge, the body of



materials he has collected on Lianmincun is the most complete, all-rounding and rich set of materials on any rural village in the whole of China. These materials are now available in database form (*Zhang Letian's Lianmincun Database*), published by the Social Sciences Academic Press.

In 2010, this author put forward the idea of rescuing such materials to the leadership at Fudan University, explaining his desire to collect “all written materials and non-governmental materials that had been procured by everyday citizens” on a nationwide scale. The university heads were very supportive of such an idea, and in 2011, Fudan University officially founded the Contemporary China Social Life Data and Research Center.

The task of collating such materials was by no means an easy one. The author’s team looked over the possible routes that could be utilized in order to retrieve such documents, and in the process slowly uncovered the sorts of documents which existed and furthermore the way in which they had been distributed across the country. After years of work, the Center has amassed a huge quantity of materials relating to the lives of everyday citizens.

2. An introduction to the materials available at Fudan University’s Contemporary China Social Life Data and Research Center

Fudan University’s collection of so-called “materials on the everyday lives of Chinese citizens” is comprised of documents created by grassroots government, enterprises and other organizations. These materials were never officially incorporated into China’s archival records system, and instead found their way into various parts of society. Examples include documents written by individuals and materials relating to individual households. The information they contain is very detailed and specific, and directly touches upon the everyday lives of the Chinese people. Over 90% are hand-written, and offer a rare glimpse into the lives of everyday people.

Over the past six years, the team has amassed nearly 200,000 items of data and written material from provinces that include Shanghai, Jiangsu, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan and Sichuan. Using these materials, the team has begun to construct a holdings system; its contents focusing on society in and around the Yangtze River basin region. In addition, the team has also collated over 310,000 hand-written letters, and over 3200 journals and work memoirs. Outlined below is a basic introduction to the materials on offer at the Center.

Data sets:

- 1: Over 10 detailed and complete accounts and statistical data sets on production brigades. The most precious of all of these are the accounts of five in particular, which include detailed records of every peasant’s daily activities and the income/distribution of several thousand households over the course of several decades.
- 2: Several dozen precious materials that have the potential for data analysis, such as a complete set of member registration forms for one city’s trade union, and cadre registration data for an area in Jiangxi that spans the latter half of the 1950s.

Written materials:

- 1: Written materials relating to grassroots government—approximately 100,000 items.
- 2: Written materials relating to enterprises and institutions—approximately 90,000 items.
- 3: Written materials relating to non-governmental organizations (including trade unions and Communist Youth Leagues)—approximately 10,000 items.
- 4: Meeting minutes.

We collated several dozen sets of consecutive meetings minutes that cover long-term time frames. Amongst

others, these include the minutes of meetings held by enterprises and public institutions, production brigades, rebel organizations and trade unions.

Materials relating to individuals and households:

- 1: Personal letters—over 310,000 items.
- 2: Personal diaries and work memoirs—over 3200 sets.

Primary Level Archives of Rural Areas and Research on Shanxi Society in the Era of Collectivization

XING Long (Shanxi University)

MA Weiqiang (Shanxi University)

In practicing the study of contemporary Chinese history, one ought to integrate both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches. However, integrating these two approaches presents new challenges for those frameworks and methodologies we use for organizing history, and also for the processes we use to unearth and utilize materials. As such, an 'information revolution' is required within the rapidly expanding field of research on contemporary Chinese social history.



1. From "one-man operation" to "collective survey": On collating the collection's historical records
 - 1) Materials were initially collated on an individual basis. Many of these individuals were staff from the Research Center for Chinese Social History at Shanxi University. Beginning with their hometowns, staff carried out surveys and collated materials in areas which they were well accustomed to and in which they had a strong social network.
 - 2) In addition to these individual surveys, we also carried out larger-scale investigations in which organized teams were dispatched to collect materials. We began these operations in villages, and then went on to expand our operations to cover larger areas such as counties and cities.
 - 3) The historical archives of rural areas are complicated and diverse. As a data set, they are a vast jumble, and were collected from all over Shanxi province. In terms of their content, in addition to villages and townships, these materials also cover factories, irrigation works and forestry centers.
2. Demonstrating the content-richness of original materials: On organizing and publishing the collection
 - 1) Twenty villages were selected from over ten million records. The materials were selected on the basis that (a) they were temporally coherent, and (b) that their content was laid out in a systematic manner.
 - 2) Systematic organization of materials: we began by classifying our materials using 'villages' as our basic unit. We then moved on to developing a catalog and creating digital files, whilst at the same time attaching reference numbers to each item. The final part of the process involved putting our files into storage. Based on the catalog we had already developed, we enclosed the materials in individual sleeves and then placed them in filing cabinets, numbering them as we went along.