

Collection Summary

ID Number: CS 097

Title: Chinese Communes

Extent: 1 Folder(s)

Span Dates: 1966-1976

Language: English

Geographic Location: China

Abstract: This collection consists of two articles about communes in China.

Historical Notes: Commune, also called people's commune, Chinese (Pinyin) renmin gongshe, (Wade-Giles romanization) jen-min kung-she, type of large rural organization introduced in China in 1958. Communes began as amalgamations of collective farms; but, in contrast to the collectives, which had been engaged exclusively in agricultural activities, the communes were to become multipurpose organizations for the direction of local government and the management of all economic and social activity. Each commune was organized into progressively larger units: production teams, production brigades, and the commune itself. As a basic unit of China's socialist system, the commune reflected the often abrupt changes in political and economic policy after 1949. While the commune's trilevel structure was retained, constant conflict revolved around the issues of local decision making, ownership of private plots of land, and payment of wages. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-60), individuals forfeited their private plots to common ownership and wages were equalized. After the economic difficulties of 1959-1961, however, the communes were reorganized. Their average size was reduced, more autonomy was granted the local production teams, private plots were returned to farmers, and wages were paid according to the work performed. The Cultural Revolution (1966-76) brought strict regimentation and a loss of local control to the communes. Responsibility for production decisions rose to the production-brigade and commune levels and was often assumed by party cadres and even the army. This period of turmoil was succeeded, especially after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, by modernizing reforms that granted unprecedented local and individual autonomy to the communes in communist China. After 1979, the communes were gradually dismantled, and farmers were encouraged to cultivate private plots and sell the produce for profit.

Sources: [Chinese Communes](#)

Selected Search Terms

Subjects: Communal living; Collective settlements; Housing, Cooperative; Collective farms; Commune; Communes (China); China

Administrative Information

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Contents	Date	Container	Folder	Location
Articles: "The Nature of Chinese People's Communes During the Cultural Revolution 1966-1976." Edna C. Don; "Communes Keep Food Going to China's Millions. Henry and Muffie Brandon.	1966 - 1976	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 11-E
