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## FOREWORD

Until the recent effort to revive the village and the township as the basic administrative units, the commune was the most important administrative and planning unit in post-1949 China. It was at the commune level that the people's congresses were elected, grain taxes collected, surplus grains purchased, and small industry and social services organized and supported. It was also at this level that projects for water control and irrigation were planned, and heavier machinery, such as tractors, harvesters, large pumps, and food processing equipment, was owned and its use coordinated. In addition, the commune had important responsibilities in such areas as elementary education, medical services, agricultural research, and the distribution of income and production.

Since their formation during the Great Leap Forward in 1958, the people's communes have undergone numerous changes in size and structure to accommodate rural patterns of communication, transport, and marketing. By mid-1975, the 75,000 communes estimated to have existed in 1963 had been consolidated into about 50,000. Communes have proved to be an important and lasting innovation of the Great Leap Forward and have played a major role in the transformation of China's rural, individual peasant economy into a collectivized agricultural system.

One of the major emphases of the University of Michigan Asia Library's collection efforts is the social, political, and economic development of post-1949 China. We have developed a strong collection of source materials capable of supporting a sophisticated level of research in these areas. In response to a growing and definite need to facilitate access to the contents of our collection and to facilitate the research work of faculty and students at Michigan and scholars elsewhere, we have at the same time initiated bibliographical efforts.

Mr. Wei-yi Ma, Chinese Bibliographer in the Asia Library, has culled information on various aspects of the commune from some 137 Chinese journals. His painstaking work will save the researcher hundreds of hours that would otherwise have been spent sifting through the literature for materials on China's communal economy, certainly one of the most important aspects of post-1949 China.

Weiying Wan  
Head  
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