

Zhang Leitian is Professor of social anthropology, Department of Sociology, and Vice Dean of School of Social Development and Public Policy, at Fudan University. He specializes in studies on rural people's lives in China during the Maoist period, in particular on Chinese People's Communes. The creation of people's communes in China was one of the largest social experiments in humanity's history, touching the lives of countless people. Yet this experiment faded from the historical scene in the early 1980s. Zhang's book *Say Goodbye to Utopia – A study of People's Commune System* (*Gaobie lixiang: renmin gongshe zhidu yanjiu*, 1998) is based on detailed material collected in his native village. Prof Zhang, together with his wife Shen Jingping (co-researcher), also born in the same village, were recently invited to give "tour lectures" at The French Academy of Sciences, LSE and Harvard University. In this lecture Prof Zhang will introduce the lives of rural people during the time of the people's communes based on a case study in the village; reveal the multilayered reasons for the ultimate demise of the people's communes; examining the social impact of people's communes and the essential value of "socialism with Chinese characteristics."