

The Lifting of the “Iron Veil” by Russian Sinologists During the Soviet Period (1917–1991)

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Abstract

This article presents personal accounts by Russian sinologists about their professional work abroad and exchanges with foreign colleagues during the Soviet period (1917–1991). Divided, isolated, oppressed, discriminated, limited, and confined to their country for many decades, Russian sinologists still managed to maintain contacts with their colleagues in China, the “socialist camp,” and the global sinology community. Sinologists in the USSR had to implement various methods to penetrate the political and ideological “Iron Veil,” to promote their studies abroad, and to participate in international cooperation on China studies. This study utilizes data obtained from nearly 40 interviews conducted in Russia as part of “The Epistemology of China Studies: Oral History Project” from 2009 to 2014. Its purpose is to demonstrate the uniqueness of professional interviews as a potentially rich source and foundation for further academic explorations of oral history on China studies.

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