

WOMEN IN THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

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A revolutionary socialist monthly, published
by the International Socialists.

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by Laurie Landy

Published by:
International Socialists
874 Broadway rm 1005
New York, N.Y. 10003

Labor Donated

May, Kyo's wife, was a doctor in a Chinese hospital. She had just come from the section of revolutionary women whose clandestine hospital she directed.

"Always the same story, you know, I've just left a kid of eighteen who tried to commit suicide with a razor blade in her wedding palanquin. She was being forced to marry a respectable brute... They brought her in her red wedding gown, all covered with blood. The mother behind, a little stunted shadow, that was sobbing of course... When I told her the kid wouldn't die she said to me: 'Poor little thing! She would almost have been lucky to die'. Lucky... That tells more than all our speeches about the condition of women here..."

Man's Fate, Andre Malraux,
story set during Shanghai uprising, March 1927.

Women in Chinese society have for centuries been relegated to a position subordinate to men. This subordination was, for much of this time, so complete that women were reduced to virtual slavery without economic power or political and social rights. Despite the Maoist regime's allegations to the contrary, the 1948 revolution did not liberate women, but was rather the latest episode in this tragic history. To understand exactly how the Communist controlled society hindered the emancipation of women and subordinated their struggle to the needs of a monolithic state, it is necessary to look at the relation of women to Chinese society in the decades of the twentieth century prior to the 1948 Communist revolution. The struggle of Chinese women for liberation did not exist in a vacuum. It must therefore be viewed within the broader perspective of the social struggles which were then challenging the basic economic and political fabric of Chinese society. In order to examine the specific case of China, a more general overview of the relation of women to the economic-social forces in society is useful in establishing the position of women in Chinese society.

1.

The status of women in any given society is affected by the social structure of the family institution which is an outgrowth of the economic organization of that society. Engels, in Origins of the Family, retraces the history of women through the evolution of the family in accordance with the development of various social systems. In the Introduction to Origins of the Family he observes:

"The less the development of labour and the more limited its volume of production and, therefore the wealth of society, the more predominately does the social order appear to be dominated by (ties of sex)."¹

In other words, the less developed the economic means of production, the more important is sexual definition as an

instrument of control. By "ties of Sex", Engles means the pre-capitalist family structure, which was a consanguinous, extended family structure because it was defined through blood lines, either matriarchical (through the female) or patriarchical (through the male), and encompassed several generations. As the means of production developed, the family unit was replaced by the territorial unit as the basis of control.

This point is illustrated by the change in both the family structure and the status of women in the transition from feudalism to the more complex economic system of capitalism. The concentration of capital in cities and the development from a rural based agricultural system to an urban based industrial society meant that political power was vested in a centralized city authority or nation-state instead of many small clans or suzerains. The obligation for education, care of the aged and orphans, and other social functions was also transferred to the city authority. When the basic economic unit became capital rather than land, women from the ruling families were no longer used as economic chattels through family arranged marriages to extend the power of the male dominated lineage. In industrial society, the family, robbed of its previous power, became a smaller conjugal structure, reduced to one or two generations and defined primarily by the marriage of a man and woman, plus their offspring. In most pre-industrial agrarian societies, the consanguinous, extended structure defined the family in terms of male lineage, giving the woman less status than the father or brother of her husband. Remnants of this male dominated family structure can be seen in the English royal family, where the daughter, even if she is the oldest, will not inherit the throne unless she has no brothers.

Capitalism, through the introduction of free labor, turned serfs into wage-slaves, but nevertheless gave them more freedom and a higher status than they had had in feudal society. Similarly, the mass introduction of women into factory work raised their status above that of women who remained in rural societies. Juliet Mitchell mentions the effect of the bourgeois revolution on the position of women in the newly emergent capitalist society in her article "Woman - the Longest Revolution":

"Capitalism and the attendant demands of the newly

emergent bourgeoisie accorded women a new status as wife and mother. Her legal rights improved, there was a vigorous controversy over her social position; wife beating was condemned." 2

II

Revolution in China could not have been a carbon copy of the history of the west. This was due to the specifics of Chinese historical development and to a differing world context. Leon Trotsky, in the early 1900's, developed a series of ideas applicable to China and pregnant with implications which are still relevant. Generally referred to as the "theory of permanent revolution", it posited that the bourgeoisie, in the epoch of imperialism, was incapable of leading a revolution against the old system. Consequently, the working class must take the leadership and carry through the revolution to socialism. The old schema of stages in which feudalism is followed by capitalism, then by a socialist revolution, was no longer possible.

In Problems of the Chinese Revolution, Trotsky applied his general theory to Chinese conditions. First, he demonstrated that the Chinese bourgeoisie existed in an economy dominated by foreign imperialism. Their role and function was largely that of compradore-brokers for the foreign capitalists. While they did want certain leverage and elbow-room, their basic interests were not separable from their alien masters. Secondly, in contrast to the classic French Revolution, the indigenous bourgeoisie was not separate from the old landowning classes who controlled society. Chinese landowners sent their sons to the cities to become compradores; compradore wealth was reinvested in landholding and related enterprises. The new property was inextricably fused with the old. Thirdly, revolutions in the modern setting had a threatening character not present in the earlier bourgeois revolts -- the presence of a working class. The great French Revolution was catapulted to the left by petty artisans, not a working class. The sansculottes -- the small artisans -- were not fundamentally hostile to private property. The new working class, once set into revolutionary motion, moved inexorably

against private property, making no distinction between old or new forms of such ownership.

The entanglements between the landowning and compradore classes, plus the new danger of a working class, meant that the bourgeoisie would never lead a real social transformation. They were too locked into the old forms, and the new possibilities were far too threatening.

Chinese industry by the mid-1920's, although new, was technologically quite advanced. The working class, while small in relation to the entire Chinese population, was radical and very heavily concentrated in urban centers. The peasants, who in old Europe were able to accelerate a bourgeois revolution by seizing the land of the feudal landowners, were in China posed against landowners who were intimately tied to the new bourgeoisie through family and property.

Under such circumstances the bourgeoisie, while wanting some modernization and leverage, found that these desires were counterproductive to maintaining their entangled position. Therefore in order to maintain their new property, they had to keep virtually the whole reactionary baggage of past ages. They moved a little, saw the disastrous implications, and pulled back.

Consequently, the bourgeoisie's vested interests rested in the maintenance of existing institutions and social relations, including the traditional consanguinous family structure, defined by male lineage and the subordination of women.

The consanguinous family in China assumed importance much greater than comparable institutions in feudal Europe. Of necessity the subordination of women was even more pervasive and complete. This was due to the different structure of Chinese land relations. In most of China, land was freely bought and sold, and the peasants were not tied to it -- in other words, serfdom did not exist -- and the agrarian order could not be called feudal. In western Europe, by contrast, the feudal lord supplanted the family unit in part, through his economic hegemony, and performed certain social as well as governmental functions, for his serfs. However, in China

no such intermediary structure could exist, given the non-feudal nature of land relations in the transition between the consanguinous family and the bourgeois state. In fact, up through the Communist takeover in 1948 the family was the basic unit of control through the institution of the "Pao Chia," which dates back thousands of years. The "Pao Chia" was a unit of five or ten families which performed practically all the governmental and social functions, including security, law and order, tax-collecting, and census taking.

Therefore, in feudal Europe, the status of a woman of the serf class was more dependent upon her position as a member of an oppressed class, along with her husband, than on her subordination within the family, since the suzerain had usurped much of the power of the family. On the other hand, in China, there being no such feudal structure over the family, and given the importance of the male dominated family unit as an instrument of control through the organization of the "Pao Chia" the peasant woman was directly under the control of her husband.

TRADITIONAL FAMILY STRUCTURE AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN

In the Chinese family the wife had no rights; she was both economically and politically disenfranchised in a structure where lineage was traced through the male. Because she could own no property of her own she was economically tied to her husband's despotic rule, nor could she leave her husband since women did not have the legal right of divorce. As she matured her status might rise by gaining power over other women, either as a mother-in-law or over other wives and concubines, if her husband was wealthy. In this system the first loyalty of the husband was to those to whom he was related by blood rather than to his wife.

The daughter in the Chinese consanguinous family was considered a liability because it was an expense to raise her, and upon maturity she would leave her parents' house to live with, serve, and belong to her husband's family. In poor families, daughters were sometimes killed at birth or sold as slaves while young. Sons, on the other hand, would carry on

the lineage and were obligated to care and provide for their parents in old age.

Marriage was an economic arrangement between two families, with romantic love playing no part. The young bride, irrespective of class origin, was bought by the bridegroom's family from her parents and she became their property. Often a woman was married in her early teens.

The *Confucian Book of Rites*, the official ideology of the system, has the following to say about the role and status of women:

"TO BE A WOMAN MEANS TO SUBMIT"
"A MARRIED WOMAN IS TO OBEY"
" THE WIFE'S WORDS SHOULD NOT TRAVEL BEYOND
HER OWN APARTMENT"
"IF A MAN IS VERY FOND OF HIS WIFE BUT HIS PAR-
ENTS DO NOT LIKE HER, SHE SHOULD BE DIVORCED"

Or consider the old Chinese saying: "A wife is like a pony bought; I'll ride her and whip her as I like." The wife was a piece of property whose function was to produce sons to carry on the lineage (failure to do so was grounds for divorce). The objectification of Chinese women is starkly symbolized by the cruel tradition of footbinding which existed in China from at least the tenth century among all classes. From early childhood the toes of Chinese women were folded under and tightly bound -- an extremely painful and permanently crippling process.

Polygamy and concubinage were widely practiced among the wealthier classes. The basis of these practices came from the fact that the first marriage of the son was determined by his parents, independent of any sexual or romantic notions he may have had. The second wife or concubine was considered a prestige symbol (since only the wealthy could afford her), and an object to satiate the husband's sexual needs.

In wealthier classes the family often encompassed several generations in one household. Property and other wealth belonged exclusively to the male head of the family and upon his death passed not to his wife but to his sons, who remained within the same household upon marriage. However, the vast

majority of Chinese people could not live in an extended family structure because the economic basis to support several generations was lacking. Most peasant families scraped out a minimal subsistence from a small piece of land which could not support many people. Therefore the sons, upon maturity, were forced to leave their parents' home and set up their own household. In *The Good Earth* Pearl Buck described with graphic literary insight the changes in family structure which accompanied the gaining of land and economic power. As a poor peasant, Wang Ho lives only with his wife and father but as he acquires land and wealth he takes into his household his uncle, aunt, and cousin, his sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren, and a concubine.

The status of women within the poorer classes was higher than within wealthier classes in China. The peasant women often worked alongside her husband and unlike her wealthier counterpart played an economically productive role. Because the husband in poorer families lacked economic wealth in the form of land to pass on to his son, he could not exert the authority over his wife that a wealthier man could. On the other hand, even among the poorest peasants wives were still bought as one would buy oxen or any other implement to help work the land. The general values and ideology of male supremacy were pervasive in all classes of society; arranged marriage and footbinding, for example, cut across all classes of society. In no class were women free to divorce their husbands, nor could they possess wealth and thus gain some degree of independence from their husbands.

For many women the cruelty of the system proved unbearable and many committed suicide rather than survive under a tyrannical husband or mother-in-law.

THE EARLY STRUGGLE FOR EMANCIPATION AND THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Women in China have a long and militant history of struggle for emancipation culminating in a revolutionary movement of women during the 1920's which included hundreds of thousands of women from the working class, the intelligentsia, and the peasantry. The struggle for emancipation of women took place as part of the general social struggle in Chinese

society against a precapitalist structure within which the traditional family was an important instrument of control. By the early 1920's cleavages developed in the rapidly growing woman's movement between those women who saw the necessity of overthrowing the total structure in order to achieve liberation, and those who felt that woman's liberation could be accomplished within the confines of the society. For example the Woman's Suffrage Association was established in Peking on July 25th, 1922, by women students behind a program of constitutional equality for women. Less than one month later on August 23rd in Peking another group of women students formed the Women's Rights League which called on women to join the revolution to overthrow the "feudal landlords" and to realize democracy.³

The evolution of the consciousness of a necessary relationship between women's struggle for liberation and the social revolution had its roots in the nineteenth century. The Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s was directed against the existing social system. Although essentially a peasant revolt, it incorporated features which (in rudimentary form) propelled it in the direction of an independent bourgeois development, in opposition to the parasitic merchants and officials who were completely subservient to the foreign imperialists. Because the Taipings developed in opposition to the landowning merchant class, they attacked the institutions upon which that class based its control, including the traditional consanguineous family, an important buttress of the regime. Specifically, in their attack on the family structure the Taipings called for an end to polygamy, adultery, slavery and footbinding. Organized units of women took part in the militias of the Taipings. In the first years of their rule minimal reforms for women were instituted in the areas they controlled. However, as the Taipings began to degenerate internally the very minimal reforms for women also slid away and by the time of their military defeat in 1864 polygamy and concubinage were prevalent in the courts of the Taiping rulers.

In the latter part of the 19th century, in the urban centers, upper class women came in contact with Western ideology due to the imperialist domination of China. Alongside the foreign armies came the missionaries who set up girls' schools. Women learned of the relatively higher status that western women had achieved since the breakup of feudalism. Many of these women

would, in the near future, be the nucleus of the women's emancipation movement -- imperialism was laying groundwork for its own destruction.

Battalions of organized women took part in the Republican Revolution in 1911 which destroyed the imperial dynasty. The Republican Constitution gave women such reforms as freedom of choice in marriage, equal educational opportunity, suffrage, and the outlawing of footbinding. However, the 1911 revolution could not complete the bourgeois revolution and sweep away the old structure because there was no class which as yet could lead the economic transformation of the country, solve the agrarian inequality and rid the country of the imperialists. The bourgeoisie-landowning class was too basically tied to the old system to lead the transformation and the proletariat did not at this point have sufficient consciousness, confidence, or strength to lead the struggle. The 1911 revolution was led by sections of the army and the intelligentsia and could not sustain a social revolution or even resolve their ambivalence toward it. Therefore, the old family structure remained intact, and the status of women changed mainly on paper. On March 19, 1912, an organized group of women stormed the republican parliament to insist that their demands for equality be carried out. They broke windows and finally were dispersed by the police.

The women's movement ebbed until 1919 when it received new impetus from a movement of students and intellectuals for social reform -- the May 4th Movement. Destruction of the traditional family system was an important part of its program and within the movement women demanded equal educational opportunities, free choice in marriage, and the right to own property.

By the early part of the 1920's women's movements existed in almost every large city and in several peasant communities. In the area of legal rights some minimal reforms were granted due to intense pressure exerted to parliament. In February 1921, the Woman's Association of Hunan established a program of equal rights -- in property ownership, inheritance, voting, the right to be elected to office, equal education, the right to work, and the right to self-determination in marriage. After months of agitation and demonstrations in December 1921 women in Hunan were given suffrage and women were elected to the

provisional legislature. Similar movements took place in Chekiang and Kwangtung Provinces.⁴ Another type of struggle took place in 1922 when the civil governor of Kwangtung issued an order prohibiting the employment of women as waitresses in teahouses and other amusement resorts, after working women began to seek employment there as an escape from the wretched life in the factory. The United Women's Association in Canton protested this action but without success.⁵

Although the old system was forced to grant certain legal reforms under the onslaught of a strong women's movement, those demands for reform of the family structure and equality for women which in any way threatened the power of the landlord-bourgeoisie could not be won. For example, concubinage could not be made illegal because its practice was too widespread among the ruling class. Therefore the predominantly middle-class women's movement after its initial successes in the early twenties began to run up against a brick wall as its program deepened.

However other forces in the country were beginning to move in this period; in particular there was a great upsurge of trade union activity in which women workers played an important role. The influx of large numbers of women into factory work had resulted in the breakdown of many of the fetters which had kept women in chains for centuries. For the first time women were given their own salaries and thus had the economic basis for independence from their husbands. Furthermore, away from their families many working-class women were choosing their own husbands. These working women were looked down upon by the society; for example, Agnes Smedley was told by her guide that the Cantonese women silk spinners were known throughout China as lesbians who refused to marry, and, if forced to do so, would bribe their husbands with part of their wages to take concubines.⁶

While relatively more liberated than the women in the peasant areas, the lot of the Chinese woman worker was extremely hard. In the Japanese-owned cotton mills of Shanghai, 50% of the female labor force was indentured. At one such mill, Tahang, 1/3 of these women died before their indentured term was over. Severe cases of tuberculosis, stomach, and skin diseases were common since the women were not allowed to see doctors. The

workers were searched at the gate, upon leaving, by armed Japanese gendarmes to see if they had taken any yarn.⁷ Women workers were given a two-week leave during periods of pregnancy and if they did not return at the end of this period they were dismissed. Babies were not allowed in foreign-owned factories to be suckled.

The following wage statistics give some indication of the poverty which the Chinese working class, as a whole, lived under during the early period of industrialization. However, without further statistics on cost of living and index adjustments for price fluctuations the statistics can give only a very cursory picture. The main value in the tables is the absolute difference in wages which men and women received, often for doing the same work.

WAGES OF CHINESE WORKERS 1920-1930

Table 1: Average Wages in Textiles, 1920 (based on 291 days work)

	Daily Wages		Yearly Wages	
	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.
Men	\$0.77	\$0.16	\$210.00	\$43.85
Women	\$0.52	\$0.14	\$149.00	\$43.67

Source: Lin Tung-Hai, The Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in China, China United Press, Shanghai, 1933, p.68.

Table 2: Average Wages in Selected Industries, 1920's

	Per Hour		Per Day	
	Per Hour	Per Day	Per Hour	Per Day
Men	\$0.047	\$0.552	\$0.120	\$1.26
Women	\$0.038	\$0.452	\$0.086	\$0.894

Source: Dakuin K. Lieu, Growth and Industry of Shanghai, Institute of Pacific Relations, Shanghai, 1936, p. 386.

Table 3: Hours Worked, Selected Industries in Shanghai, 1920's

	Cotton Spinning	Silk Weaving
Men	12	11.75
Women	11	11.90

Source: Dakuin K. Lieu, Growth and Industry in Shanghai, p. 386.

Other sources place the number of hours worked by women as high as fourteen with a six to seven day work week.

Women workers were concentrated in the textile industries, as they had been in the early stages of the industrial revolution in the west. These industries were found in the large urban centers such as Shanghai, Canton, and Wuhan. In fact in Shanghai, later to be the base of the Proletariat Soviet in 1927, 60.1% of the labor force was female by 1931, given the heavy concentration of textiles in this city. The following sample gives some indication of the number of women employed in factory work.

NUMBER OF CHINESE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS 1915-1930

Table 4: Chinese Work Force, Selected Industries, 1915

	Number of Establishments	Male	Female
Cotton	581,871	1,157,944	954,848
Linen	71,730	80,291	120,196

Source: Lin Tung-Hai, The Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in China, p. 55.

Table 5: Chinese Work Force, 1920

	Number of Establishments Reporting	Male	Female
Cotton	233,743	496,530	1,131,369
Total	1,580,389	6,135,448	1,698,901

Source: Lin Tung-Hai, The Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in China, p. 55.

In the general upsurge of working class economic struggles women workers played a militant and important role. In Shanghai in 1922, 20,000 women workers from 24 silk filatures went on strike to demand a ten hour workday (they were working 14) plus an increase of 5¢ per day. For three days women demonstrated in the streets with banners until five leaders of the strike were arrested. The strike was called off for fear that the arrested women would be executed. As a result, the workday was temporarily reduced to 11 1/2 hours but was soon back to 14 and the wage increase was never given. Two years later in June, 14,000 women in the silk filatures of Shanghai staged another unsuccessful strike,⁹ and again in June 1926 women at the silk filatures went on strike for a 10% wage increase and a one hour reduction of the workday, plus the demand that no worker be dismissed without cause.¹⁰ In Wuhan, between January and April 1927, women and children textile workers earning 12¢ per day fought for and won increases to 20¢ per day.¹¹ In the strike wave which swept Shanghai in 1926 women workers expanded their demands from higher wages and shorter hours to demands for better social conditions--sick pay, medical service, compensation for injuries and the demand of a one month salary for women workers during confinement due to childbirth.

In the mid-twenties, at the same time women workers were becoming radicalized through trade union struggle, sections of the middle class women's movement became explicitly revolutionary, in part due to the limitation of their struggle by the ruling class, and in part due to the work of Communist Party cadres in their ranks. For the first time large numbers of proletarian women joined the women's movement. The National Women's Association, which was dominated by the Communist Party, had 300,000 members during the period of 1925-27.¹² Women played an important role in the proletarian uprisings of 1926, and one of the first acts of the short lived Canton Commune was to give women the same economic and legal status as men.¹³

However, the revolutionary women's movement was soon destroyed by external events. The Communist Party, the accepted leadership of the proletarian struggle, entered the Kuomintang, party of the indigenous bourgeoisie, and subordinated the proletarian struggle for socialism on the theory (of Stalin's Comintern) that the native bourgeoisie would fight against foreign domination and create a successful bourgeois revolution. Instead, the Kuomintang militias turned upon the proletarian forces, which they feared more than the foreigners -- in Canton in 1927 and in other urban centers shortly afterward. As a result, the proletarian movement was brutally smashed and thousands of revolutionary workers were massacred in huge bloodbaths.

The reaction brutally destroyed the independent women's movement. After the Canton Commune at least two to three hundred women were murdered because they had bobbed their hair--the symbol of emancipation.¹⁴ An interview with a high-ranking Kuomintang official in Shanghai's China Forum in May 1932 confirmed the fact that many of those killed were women.¹⁵ Helen Snow was told in an interview with a Communist woman leader that over 1,000 women leaders throughout China were killed in 1927. Many of those killed were not Communists but women active in the women's movement.¹⁶ Accompanying the reign of murder was an almost unbelievable bestiality; women were tortured and their breasts cut off before they were beheaded, and their corpses were mutilated.

The fate of the proletarian revolution and the women's movement were inextricably tied together. The only class capable of leading the break-up of the semi-feudal land relations and driving out the imperialists was the proletariat. And only a thoroughgoing social revolution which would destroy the economic base upon which the traditional family structure rested could change the status of women in Chinese society. Therefore, in order to maintain its economic and social position, even at the price of foreign domination, the Chinese bourgeoisie through its representatives the Kuomintang was forced to oppose both the proletarian forces and the allied peasants and women's movements. The Chinese family was one of the important foundationstones of the old order and

an important instrument of control. Consequently, any movement for the emancipation of women would shake the very foundation of the power of the landlord-bourgeoisie. Whereas in Western society the bourgeoisie had in the course of its revolution permitted the raising of the status of women, in China, because of the interlocking nature of landed and bourgeois interests they could neither carry out the social revolution nor tolerate the existence of a radical independent women's movement.

CHINESE WOMEN UNDER THE NATIONALIST REGIME

After the brutal crushing of the Proletarian Soviets by Kuomintang and the expulsion of the Communist Party, trade union activity subsided somewhat for the next few years. Communist trade unions were declared illegal and the Kuomintang set up its own trade union structure. In 1927 there were 59 fewer strikes than in 1926 in Shanghai alone, because many of the most advanced elements of the proletariat had been butchered. However as the following table indicates, the working class was far from docile during the thermidor years, and women workers played a large role in trade union action.

Table 6: Strike activity in Shanghai, 1926-1931

	Total Strikes	Total Strikers	Male	Female
1926	169			
1927	110	230,256		195,200
1928		213,966	68,728	122,807
1929	108	69,613	37,247	31,263
1931	145			

Sources: line 1: Harold Isaacs, Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, p. 147.
 line 2-4: Fang Fu'An, Chinese Labour, Kelly and Walsh, 1931, p. 92.
 line 5: Harold Isaacs, Five Years of Kuomintang Reaction, China Forum, 1932.

(Note: Because the statistics were taken from three different sources there are obvious discrepancies in the figures. Also, the chaos of the period and the rudimentary methods of sample taking give some hesitation as to their sources.)

Textiles, in which women had the heaviest (60-80%) concentration, accounted for 44% of all strikes in these years.¹⁷ During ten weeks in early 1931, 70 strikes of women workers took place in the cotton mills and silk filatures of China.¹⁸

The conditions of Chinese working women remained essentially the same as in the 1920's period. In 1931 women in the Shanghai cotton industry worked 72 hours per week on 12 hour shifts. And even as late as 1946, the English Board of Trade Mission to China found that many women in the cotton industry worked 10-11 hours a day.¹⁹ Until after the 1948 revolution women received less pay than men for the same work.

Table 7: Average Monthly Income of Chinese Workers

	1938	1940
Men Hourly	22.352 yuan	43.607
Women Hourly	12.648	23.024
Men Piecework	26.551	51.884
Women Piecework	16.426	34.670

Source: China Year Book, 1943, Asia Statistics Company, Tokyo, p. 1018.

(Note: one yuan was roughly \$0.42 U.S. currency in 1960)

A 1937 study by Cora Ding of 368 women and girls in 102 Shanghai factories, encompassing 19 different industries, concluded that the average Chinese woman worker was unmarried, 19, illiterate and earned the equivalent of \$4.83 in U.S. dollars per month. 42.4% of these women were 18-21 years; 25.3% were 14-17 years old; and 16.6% were 22-25.²⁰

The same study also showed that 83% of the women were single and only 16.5% married, indicating the degree to which the family structure was disintegrating with the rise

of industrial China. Apart from a small number of widows, the vast majority of these working women, of whom 75% were 18 or older, were not married. Previously a woman was often married in her early teens or even younger and a woman who was not married in her early twenties was considered a disgrace.

It was clear that the Kuomintang could not dam up the social forces which were pressing to break down the archaic structure. The regime had degenerated into a reign of plunder and banditry. The breaking down of the family structure related to the old order was tied to the general disintegration of all the old Chinese institutions.

The Kuomintang, in an attempt to solidify their power, overtly controlled the women's movement in the first years after the unsuccessful revolution. Only those organizations which supported the official government were allowed to exist. Woman's unions were carefully scrutinized by the government. By the middle of the 1930's, when the regime had fallen into chaos and corruption was rampant, Chiang Kai-Shek inaugurated "The New Life Movement" which was aimed at tightening discipline. It is not surprising that part of the program was directed against the "modern woman" who danced, wore short hair, used make-up and otherwise violated the traditional role of her sex. Chiang Kai-Shek correctly saw these women as a threat to his power in so far as their independence challenged the whole social fabric -- in particular, the family role to which they had been relegated. In 1936, 450 "modern girls" were arrested in Shantung Province by order of the provincial governor. They were found guilty of violating the regulations of the New Life Movement which forbid women to have bobbed hair, use powder, or wear short sleeves or trousers.²¹

Although officially the Nanking Legal Code had given women equality -- the right to own and inherit property, divorce rights and the like, these reforms were never carried out. For example, women were still imprisoned for adultery for up to two years on the word of their husband. In the Canton Police Jail for Women prisoners, the majority under 21, were held without a trial, three to an eight by ten foot cell. One typical case involved a woman who had been forced by her parents into marriage with a 42 year old man when she was 16.

After three months she ran away with her lover and when she was caught the man was released and she was given an eight month sentence.²²

When the question of unequal penalties for adultery was debated within the parliament, it was suggested that men should also be punished for adultery. A great uproar was heard, for many of the leading figures of China kept concubines and would thus be subject to arrest. The suggestion to throw out the regulation was defeated in favor of reducing the maximum punishment for women from two years to one. As a result, the Chinese Women's Association of Nanking filed a petition demanding that everyone committing adultery should be equally punished. When their petition was defeated they formed a new group -- The Woman's League to Fight for Equality Before Law. This organization concentrated upon petitioning and talking to high officials. The movement spread to the Shanghai YWCA which also sent representatives to Nanking.²³ This movement was middle class, analogous to the moderate section of the women's movement which had existed in the early 1920's and had fought for women's reforms within the framework of the system.

THE JAPANESE INVASION, THE RESURGENCE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, AND THE POPULAR FRONT

The threat from Japan provided an impetus to all opposition forces in the society, including the resurgent radical women's movement, by creating further disorganization in an already chaotic situation. In December of 1935 several thousand women students in Shanghai founded the Women's National Salvation Association. On the day of its founding they marched through the streets under the banners:

"STOP CIVIL WAR"

"FORM A UNITED FRONT AGAINST JAPAN TO
SAVE THE NATION"

"WOMEN CAN EMANCIPATE THEMSELVES ONLY
THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN RESISTANCE"

A short time later tens of thousands of women workers walked out of the Japanese owned cotton mills in Shanghai and Tsingtao.

During the Second World War women were brought into productive economic work in huge numbers to fill the jobs of the men who were fighting. Patriotic organizations of women to raise money and provide medical aid also grew up. In Shanghai alone 28 women's organizations worked to support the war effort. The war gave women the opportunity to organize and to raise their status through participation in the war effort. ²⁶ Battalions of women fought in the army in Kwantung and Kwangsi Provinces, and in Chekinag there was a Women's Guerilla Band. The Communist Eighth Route Army also had a Women's Detachment.

During the Japanese war the Communist Party followed a policy quite similar to the disastrous course of the 1920's. It submerged its military force into the Kuomintang, although the political apparatus did not officially join the Kuomintang as it had in the twenties. The political program of the Communists for social revolution was lost behind the politics of national resistance. The origins of this policy can be found in the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in August 1935, where the Popular Front Line was adopted, calling for cooperation by the Communists with all classes in the anti-Fascist struggle. Even after Stalin's collaborationist policy had resulted in the massacre of its forces, the Chinese Communists still fell in line behind the Comintern orders and the Popular Front policy.

Mao Tse Tung, interviewed by Helen Snow in 1938, summed up the Communist Party's reformist position: "A few days ago I asked Mao Tse Tung, Chairman of the Military Council, if the Red Army would carry the Red Flag as well as the National Flag in fighting the Japanese", she reported. 'No', he replied, 'When we change the uniforms of course we must change our flag also.'²⁷

The Popular Front policy was followed by the women in the organizations under Communist Party control. In May 1938, Madame Chiang Kai-Chek organized a conference in

Kuling to discuss the participation of women in the war effort and the mobilization of women in industry. Among the 57 delegates in attendance was Mrs. Chou En-Lai, wife of the Communist leader, who gave a detailed report of the work of women in the Communist controlled areas of the country.²⁸

As the Popular Front disintegrated, however, the Kuomintang began to push women back into the home and to attack the radical women's organizations that were springing up alongside the "patriotic" women's organizations. In the Spring of 1941 at a conference of leaders of the women's war effort called by the Central Organization Department of the Kuomintang, the women were told that women should concentrate on the family and on having more children and that it was harmful for every woman to strive to take part in politics. The women's movement, according to the Kuomintang, should limit its program to vocational training, welfare, and family problems.²⁹ Soon after, at about the same time that the Fourth Route Army of the Communists was attacked by the Nationalist forces, many leaders of the more radical sections of the women's movement were arrested by the Kuomintang, and others were forced to flee to the Communist zones in the North for sanctuary. In the capital of Kweichow, for example the Kuomintang accused the YWCA and local Women's New Life Movements of being Communist. A YWCA meeting on "What is Democracy" was broken up by the Kuomintang, which ordered that no further meetings could be held without permission of the Kuomintang and without a Kuomintang member as chairman.³⁰

Although the breakdown of the society and the effects of the war had forced the Kuomintang to loosen its tenacious control of China, a few short years later it clamped down again because of the threat posed to its power by the social character of the anti-Japanese resistance forces. The Communist Party, by its submergence of revolutionary politics into the anti-war popular front, facilitated the reaction of the early forties as it had fifteen years earlier during the proletarian uprisings. Again many revolutionaries, including leaders of the radical women's movement, lost their lives, were imprisoned, or were forced to flee.

WOMEN IN THE COMMUNIST OCCUPIED ZONE

In marked contrast to the Kuomintang, the Communist Party supported the development of a radical women's movement, recognizing the role that this struggle could play in destroying the old society. In 1927, for example, Mao Tse Tung wrote of the peasant movement in Hunan:

And now with the rise of the peasant movement, women in many places have set out immediately to organize the rural women's association, the opportunity has come for them to lift up their heads, and the authority of the husband is tottering more and more every day. In a word, all feudal and patriarchal ideologies and institutions are tottering as the power of the peasant rises.³¹

Having recognized after the annihilation of its cadres in the 1920's that the bourgeoisie would not create a social revolution, the Communist Party now moved into the rural areas and led a peasant army under its own control. For both political and economic reasons the Communists recognized that the breakup of the consanguine family structure and its accompanying doctrine of male supremacy were necessary for Communist control of Chinese society, just as the breakup of the feudal relations of control had been a necessity for the aspiring capitalist class in Western society:

It is true that the Chinese people have broken the feudal patriarchal (family) system. It must be known that this patriarchal society has long since ceased to exist in capitalist society--and this is a matter of capitalist progress.

--Party Resolution on Questions Concerning Peoples' Committees, Dec. 10, 1958.³²

Furthermore, in an underdeveloped country where capital is scarce, the only way to expand the industrial base is through labor-intensive projects. Western capitalism in its early stages made extensive use of child and female labor. In con-

trast, the structure of the Chinese family which kept women in the home threatened to deprive the Communists of a vast reserve of labor power. Helen Snow makes the following comment:

...The communes were 'point of coincidence' where needs of state met needs of improving the status of women. When it became clear that big machinery could not be purchased or paid for, the state went all out for maximum use of human labor power, utilizing women not only in place of new machinery but in place of new capital.³³

The areas occupied by the Communist Party after the long march in 1934 were among the most backward in China. Although women in this predominately agricultural region took part in farm work they had not achieved the independence of the working women in the cities or women among the intelligentsia. Communist cadres formed women's organizations among the peasant women and taught them to read and write. Although these unions were officially independent of the Communist Party, Communist members played leading roles and thus indirectly exercised control.

Since many of the men were in the Guerilla Armies, especially after the 1937 Japanese invasion, women in the Communist Zone began to gain independence because they were brought into production, assuming the work formerly done by their husbands, were for the first time paid their own wages for home work, making socks and clothes for guerilla troops. The working conditions in this zone were better than in the south, although tight production schedules often meant that the women worked longer than the officially set hours. In one area Wu Chi Chen, women received equal pay for equal work, a four month paid pregnancy leave, worked an eight hour day, six days a week, and were provided free nurseries for their children.³⁴ Exactly how much of this was actually instituted is impossible to know.

Women were also given legal equality -- freedom in marriage and divorce and the right to own property. This re-

sulted in tremendous changes: in one village 100 miles southwest of Peking, for example, of 267 couples married in 1938, 95% were married through arrangement by their parents. After the village was occupied by the Communist Army, only 22% of the marriages in the years between 1938 and 1948 were arranged by the parents.³⁵

WOMEN IN THE NEW SOCIETY

The first years of Communist rule were a period of consolidation: eliminating the vestiges of the previous society, bringing all classes under its domination and reshaping all institutions. Initially neither land nor capital was collectivized; in fact in the first year private industry was given guarantees that it would not suffer:

because the target of the revolution is not the bourgeoisie in general, but imperialist and feudal oppression, the programme of the revolution is not to abolish private property, but to protect private property in general; the results of this revolution will clear the way for the development of capitalism.

--Mao Tse-Tung, On Coalition Government, 1945.

China would finally have its belated "bourgeois" revolution, but under the guardianship of the Communist Party. It soon became clear that the capitalists had no future as an independent class but could exist solely as agents of the state. Gradually the state tightened the reins on the private sector in both industry and agriculture, until by the initiation of the Great Leap Forward in 1957, the means of production were totally in the hands of the Communist Party by virtue of its monolithic control of the political apparatus.

In the first years of Communist rule, when all the old institutions of the society were being destroyed, the Communist Party encouraged the women's associations to challenge the traditional Chinese family and its enslavement of women. Women were also encouraged to take part in production in

order to gain economic equality with men. However after the first years when power was consolidated and the need of the society was stability in order to efficiently carry out industrialization, the liberation of women was subordinated to the needs of the state. Women were again treated as a marginal sector of the work force to be used in times of need and to be sent back to the house when unemployment crept up. A new structure of the family was imposed with an ideology which saw the family as a production unit subservient to the state and built around the ideological and economic needs of the state. Chinese Woman once again found fetters placed on her freedom, as a woman, to determine her own life and creative contribution to the society, and she had only a tenuous hold on the social and economic equality she had been given with men. The position of women in Maoist China must be viewed, just as before the revolution, within the context of Chinese society and can only be evaluated through an evaluation of the total society.

THE FATE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The 1950 marriage law eliminated the legal basis for the subservient role of woman in the society. The law contained many gains which women in capitalist society had held for some time: family arranged marriage, polygamy, and concubinage were abolished; women could obtain divorces and remarry; children born out of wedlock had the same rights as other children. The legal marriage age was raised to 18 for women and 20 for men in order to eliminate child marriage. The ancient doctrine of filial piety was replaced with mutual responsibility between parents and children for care and assistance. In 1950 all houses of prostitution were closed and prostitutes were given health care and integrated into productive activity (clearly an advance on capitalist civilization).

The efforts by women in China during the first years of Communist rule to gain in actuality what they had been granted on paper was a very difficult and bitter struggle. The traditional values of male supremacy and women's subordination did not fall easily. William Hinton in *Fanshen*, a book based on the author's experiences in the peasant village of

Long Vow in 1948 describes the struggles of women for emancipation:

... (most of the men) regarded any activity by wives or daughter-in-laws outside the home as 'steps leading directly to adultery'. Family heads, having paid sound grain for their women regarded them as their private property. Many young wives were badly beaten up when they got home.³⁶

The militant women's associations played an active role in the first years of the struggle, giving women the confidence to break the tyranny of the husband. Sometimes, as Hinton describes, the only way to deal with a tyrannical husband who beat his wife was for the women's association to confront him and physically assault him until he submitted. For many Chinese women liberation from the ancient family structure was literally a matter of life and death; in 1952 in eight districts of Shantung Province alone, 504 women committed suicide or were murdered by their family. The total number of women who lost their lives during the struggle for freedom probably numbers in the thousands.

While the Communist Party was still struggling against the remnants of the family structure of the previous era, the deepening of tensions within the family, both generational and between husband and wife, worked in the Party's interests. Women, consequently, were encouraged by the Communist Party to organize for militant struggle. However once the archaic vestiges were broken down and it was in the Party's interest to have tranquility and stability, the Communist party sought to remove the tensions within the family they had helped to build up.

The changing attitude of the Communist Party towards the level of struggle and militancy of the women's movement which had existed even before 1948 in the Communist occupied zones is an excellent parameter of the change in party line on the whole question of the liberation of women in the society. The official attitude of the Communist Party in 1948 was:

The freeing of women can't be isolated from revolution as a whole. Two wrong tendencies were to be guarded against: one was to think that all would be well with women so long as general revolutionary aims were fulfilled and that there was therefore no need to pay special attention to women's problems or to have separate women's organizations; the other was to think that women's emancipation was a cause in itself, not part of the revolution.

--Decision of the Central Committee
of the C.C.P., Dec. 20, 1948³⁷

This viewpoint which recognized the need for an independent women's movement and the inadequacy of "legal equality", stood in sharp contrast to the official line only seven years later when the control of the Communist Party was secure:

The new constitution has guaranteed women's equality with men in political, economic, cultural, social and family interests, and the state has come to protect women's right in marriage, in the family, in motherhood and in the welfare of children. Henceforth women no longer need to initiate a militant struggle for such things.³⁸
(emphasis added)

What, then, is the current role of the women's movement? It has become an arm of the state to mobilize women for production and to increase their "enthusiasm" to spend all their time (even spare time) in productive work. Women are now told that the state will take care of their needs -- they no longer have any reason to struggle. The once militant women's movement has been stripped of its former role in leading women in the struggle for emancipation and has been redefined as a propaganda agent for bringing women-power into the productive process.

In 1953 the bulk of the All-China Women's Congress was spent listening to "labor heroines" relate how they had surpassed quotas and cut down wastage. The Vice-President of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation, Ting Ying-

Chao (Mrs. Chou En-Lai) reported to the Congress:

This is the first year of our Five-Year Construction plan. The central task of the women's movement in the future is to fully mobilize and organize the broad masses of women to participate in industrial and agricultural production in every field on national construction.³⁹

The All-China Women's Democratic Federation which was formed from the multitude of Women's Associations played an important role whenever mass movements were initiated (from the top) and was very active in the "Three-Antis" and "Five-Antis" Campaigns in the early fifties. Although the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party, after debate, rejected the recommendation to disband the women's organization (it had been argued that women no longer needed special organizations since the state had given them equality) it was clear that the organization would be nothing more than a tool for the central regime.⁴⁰

Jan Myrdal's Report from a Chinese Village contains an interview with the head of the women's organization in Liu Ling. She describes how its original functions were to activate women in social work (such as implementation of legal equality for women) and to get them to accept political responsibility and go to different meetings and speak. The organization was abolished in 1961 because it wasn't needed and was replaced by a women's work group with the following five tasks: organize women to take an active part in production, spread literacy, help do domestic work effectively, teach personal and public hygiene and give help and advice over marriage or other personal problems.⁴¹

FAMILY, MARRIAGE, MORALITY, AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Family

In the early years of Communist control, when property was still privately owned, the attack upon the traditional family structure was fought on several different levels. The

economic basis of the family was undermined by giving women the legal right to own and inherit property as well as equal status with their husbands in the possession and management of property and wealth. As a consequence a woman no longer need remain bound to a brutal husband because she had no method of supporting herself. A woman's wages were now paid directly to her rather than to her husband. The final deathblow to the economic power of the family came with the collectivization of all private property in the late 1950's, the means of production now being transferred to the state.

The new family unit, without economic power and without support from a large kinship organization, could not perform the multiplicity of socio-economic functions and retain its traditional position as the core of Chinese society. Thus, the family ceased to be a self-contained autonomous unit, becoming part of the wider unit, the state, to which it owed its first allegiance. A new family structure developed and one of its primary functions was as a work unit for the state. The "Red Star" or model family was described in terms of the contribution each member made to the functioning of the state and raising of productivity:

The father was a model cook in a restaurant, the son was a model student, the grandmother a model for her age in doing field work. Wang Yun herself was a field worker and a probationary member of the Communist Party.⁴²

In order to break down the ideology of the traditional family--filial piety and male supremacy--children and wives were urged to denounce their relatives for "counter-revolutionary activity". The denunciation campaign was a frontal attack on the concepts of kinship loyalty and face saving. Mutual suspicion among members of the family weakened old ties. Home spying was widely used in the "3-Anti" and "5-Anti" campaigns in 1952. A typical article in this period appealed to women on the following basis:

Sisters, if your father, brother, husband, or child has committed any of the above-mentioned crimes, you must rid yourselves of any scruples and cour-

ageously prevail on them to confess or you must report them...everyone must understand that it is a glorious thing to induce your own relatives to confess or to report your own relatives, the only shameful thing is to protect them.⁴³

For those unwilling to transfer their total and complete loyalty to the state, penalties were imposed. The New China News Agency reported on August 27, 1955:

The People's Court of Kwang Chi in Hupeh Province recently sentenced Lan Jang-li to five years imprisonment for shielding his counter-revolutionary father, Kan Hua-fan over a long period.⁴⁴

Even as recently as September 1968, Liu Ping Ling, daughter of purged Communist leader Liu Shao-Chi attacked her parents as "dog father and mother".⁴⁵

Marriage and Divorce

The 1950 Marriage Law gave both parties the right to dissolve the marriage upon mutual consent, or if contested by one party the affair would be taken to court for a decision. In the first years of their rule, the Communist Party encouraged women who were bound in unhappy marriages to dissolve them. Divorce was used as another lever in undermining the traditional family. The divorce rate soared from 186,000 in 1950 to 409,000 in 1951 and almost double that in 1952. In Peking and 21 nearby cities the number of divorces leaped from 9,300 in the first four months of 1950 to 17,763 in the next third of the year.⁴⁶ However, as the Party consolidated its power and created a new family structure, they began putting stricter curbs on divorces which, they felt, would have a disruptive effect both on production and on the society at large if continued at the previous pace. Articles such as "Let Us Correctly Enforce the Marriage Law to Abolish the Feudalistic Marriage Institution" (New China Monthly No. 19, 1951) appeared with greater frequency.

Although women legally had the freedom to marry whomever they chose, in fact the Communist Party had very definite ideas about the role of marriage and standards of eligibility for a prospective husband. A husband should be sought who would create a union so that the couple could fulfill the obligation to the state both for total loyalty and productive involvement:

...For such improper acts, during a specific period of time and to a definite extent, will influence the normal feelings of certain people and the work entrusted such people by the State and the people...To consider marriage and the family problems merely as individual problems of private life is unilateral and incorrect.
--People's Daily, April 1, 1955⁴⁷

Helen Snow, in her book *Women in Communist China*, views the relationship between the Communist Party and marriage in the following way:

...the new marriage had to be put on a stable basis or it would have ruined the prestige of the new society. The whole group in fact was taking a hand in trying to guarantee the success of every marriage, with the Communist Party inheriting the role of matchmaker.

Marriage for members of the Communist Party was even more closely scrutinized; approval from the party was mandatory, and forthcoming only when the Party was convinced of the political soundness of both partners, including such considerations as class origins and production records.

In March of 1953 a month long campaign was initiated to acquaint every household with provisions of the 1950 marriage law. An initial family-by-family investigation to see how well people were abiding with the provisions of the law met with such resistance that it was quickly limited to government officials and party members.⁴⁸

Although the official age for marriage is 18 for women

and 20 for men, the unofficial age which the government sanctions, and in the case of party members approves, has slowly crept up over the years. In 1966 a reporter interviewing a young woman in Canton during the Cultural Revolution was told that she considered 27 the correct marriage age for women and 31 for men. Only three years earlier in 1963 the unofficially sanctioned age was 23 for women and 26 for men.⁴⁹

The reasons for this are not difficult to see. In the first place, early marriages mean more pregnancies, which deprive the regime of an important source of labor power by temporarily incapacitating young women. And secondly the economy does not have the social facilities in the form of adequate day care centers to take care of the children while their mother works, nor does it wish to devote a large section of its labor power to the production of agriculture and commodities in order to feed and clothe a rapidly expanding population at the sacrifice of primary industrialization.

Women in China have been formally freed from their former slave-like existence in which their marriage was an economic contract arranged by their parents and they certainly have greater freedom in choosing a husband. However, within that context new barriers have been put up in the form of discouraging "young marriages" and framing the marriage in terms of its accord with the ruling political power. Helen Snow said that marriage must be put on a "stable" basis or it would have ruined the prestige of the society; what is actually at stake is not prestige per se, but the ability of the new family to fill the vacuum left by the chaotic rupture of the old during the first years of the regime. Therefore, marriage in China has become a political contract which must be sanctified in accordance with the subordination of all individuals and institutions to a state where political power is concentrated at the center.

Morality

The family historically has served as a conservative bulwark of society, a force for stability, which can also act as a transmission belt to the people for the inculcation of the myths and ideology of those who control the society. This is why in virtually every society which has emerged from the pre-capital

formation stage, sexual relations which fall outside the established family institutions are frowned upon by the state, and often punishable by prison. Such relationships which take place outside of the family structure help to undermine the legitimacy of the family and as a consequence deprive the ruling strata of society of an important means of social control.

In China, a state which by its very structure cannot allow any independent or spontaneous movement to arise outside of its control because of the fusion and concentration of political power at the center, sexual relations, which by their very nature are spontaneous, must be kept within the established family framework. As a result, China has fashioned a rigorous 'puritannical ideology in regard to marriage and sexual relations.

The following excerpt from China Youth, April 1, 1955 indicates the State's attitude towards sex:

The way part of our youth now devote themselves to lovemaking is quite incompatible with the great era in which we live. During this period, if some of our youth take too much interest in love and devote too much of their time and energy to this problem, it would be detrimental to the national interests.⁵⁰

In an interview with a Communist Party member who teaches at a University in Peking, Mary Endicott, a Canadian writer who is sympathetic to the Maoist regime, was told that the Communist Party strongly condemns sex intimacy outside of marriage, and the problems of "free love" do not arise except when conditions were unstable and party discipline lax.⁵¹

There are conflicting reports as to whether pre-marital relationships are against the law. Helen Snow states that pre-marital sex is a statutory offense which carries a six-month prison term for the man. Edgar Snow received contradictory answers when he asked Communist Party members about pre-marital sex -- one person claiming it was illegal, the other denying that but agreeing that it is officially frowned upon.⁵³

The combination of pressure for late marriage from the

state together with the condemnation of sexual relations before marriage may create a tension within the society which could result not only in a challenge to the stringent morality, but a challenge to the whole use of that morality as an instrument of control. Only in a socialist society where the family does not exist as an institution of control can women be freed to fashion their relations with men as they choose rather than in accordance with the needs of a ruling class.

Role of Women in the Society

Any tensions within the family which take on organized dimensions, such as generational or husband-wife conflict, will undermine the stabilizing and indoctrinating role played by the new family in Chinese Communist society, and may well generalize and spill into the society in a manner which would threaten the power of the Communist Party. Consequently, since 1953, there has been a noticeable tendency to tone down the political mission of women while at the same time putting a higher value on family life to create harmony between man and wife. Previously, the emphasis on engaging women in production in the early 1950's led to the social ostracization of the "family woman" (so named because she did not work in production). A woman who put her family duties and personal happiness above the state was looked upon as "bourgeois" in this first period.

However, in 1955 a new Communist Party line appeared which stressed as the main responsibility for women "the building of a democratic and harmonious family, united for production and devoted to the cause of socialist reconstruction". Whereas the role of housemaker had been looked upon with contempt, articles began appearing in the middle Fifties in the official press glorifying the "family woman" for both her motherly duties and housekeeping role. Hers was the mission, because of the consumer goods shortage in the country, to economize. Model housewives were chosen who had drastically cut down their families' consumptive pattern. An editorial in the Shanghai Daily News on April 1, 1956 told women explicitly that their roles and responsibility lay in homemaking and encouraging their husbands and relatives to accept the socialization of commercial and in-

dustrial enterprises.⁵⁴

Much of the reason for the change in the official Party attitude towards the role of women in the society lay in the problems of assimilating women into the work force. In November 1957 the Peoples' Daily stated that only part of available labor power in the urban areas can be absorbed in industry, in spite of its rapid expansion, and thus housewives should learn to content themselves with housework which was "as honorable as any other kind of work".⁵⁵ Women, because of their primary role as housekeeper and childrearer, are the first to be let go when employment becomes scarce; their employment is of a marginal nature, to be used only when the economy requires.

In 1958 the Great Leap Forward was initiated; this plan envisioned the rapid expansion of China's industrial capacity through intensive use of human capital. Subsequently the Party propaganda did a complete turnabout in regards to the role of women in society. Women were once more urged to take part in production and their role as homemaker and mother was de-emphasized. At the National Heroines meeting, the ideal Socialist Woman was described as unselfish, hardworking, thinking only of group welfare and her contribution to the state instead of personal and family happiness.

Women of China, the largest women's journal put out by the National Women's Federation, ran a series of articles, letters, and editorials from April to September 1960 which discussed and criticized women who concern themselves too much with family matters in a manner reminiscent of the line taken by the Party against the family woman in the early Fifties. One editorial in the series says:

The party has taught us a revolutionist ought to establish the philosophy of revolution no matter when, one ought to put the career of revolution first and individual family matters second.⁵⁶

After the failure of the Great Leap Forward to industrialize the country as quickly as expected, the "family duties" of women again gained prominence in the party press. In late 1965

Women of China carried the following excerpt from an article on "teaching oilmen's wives":

Most housewives were used to doing the family laundry. But oil workers clothes are full of mud, dirt, oil, and grease. To make it worse, the clothes have a bad smell. However when the housewives think that this is a direct service for the oil workers and is a revolutionary work, they no longer regard the job as filthy and tiring.⁵⁷

Reproduction

The development of effective contraception has been of world-historic importance in the emancipation of women. As long as reproduction remained an uncontrollable phenomenon, women were not masters of a large part of their lives, having no choice over how often or even whether they chose to have children. Their existence was subject to forces completely outside their control. Once sexual experience was separated from reproduction, women were freed from many of the anxieties and taboos that had placed fetters upon their existence. Once reproduction became voluntary, child-bearing no longer needed to be the ultimate reason of existence or vocation for women. Motherhood became instead only one of many choices.

However in China the availability of contraception has not been determined by its importance as a basic condition for women's emancipation but is, rather, determined by the needs of production and the State.

There were at least four different stages in the official attitude of the Communist Party to birth control up through the early sixties. In the first years of the Communist regime birth control was opposed as Malthusian and thus counter-revolutionary. A 1952 editorial in People's Daily described birth control as "a means of killing Chinese without shedding blood".⁵⁸ However, as the pressure of an expanding population and the need to preserve scarce capital for heavy industrial produc-

tion became more pronounced, birth control slipped in through the back door in the early Fifties. In 1953 birth control was given unpublicized approval by the State Council. The first public advocacy of birth control, by Shao Li Tzu, a member of the National Peoples Congress, was not until September 1954. However, even during this period, information on contraception was still largely unavailable to the vast majority of Chinese women.⁵⁹

Throughout the Fifties improved health care had resulted in a decline in both infant and child mortality and an increased life expectancy for the old. Furthermore the high rate of conception meant that young women were withdrawn from production. In one Shanghai factory in the mid-1950's, 17% of the women were pregnant twice a year, 53% once a year and 22% twice in three years.⁶⁰ In addition, the society could not provide enough facilities to take care of the children nor did they care to direct their industrialization to commodity goods for that end. Therefore in March 1957, a party edict went out that "all areas in our country must promote appropriate birth control". Two months later the abortion law was greatly liberalized to allow abortions within the first three months of pregnancy, whereas previously abortions had been granted only upon a doctor's legal advice. The Party press also put out material on family size, describing the ideal number of children to be three or at most four, spaced at long intervals. Birth control clinics opened up throughout the country and contraceptives were distributed freely.

The campaign was suddenly stopped eight months later. Precisely why is not clear but, like the "enforce the marriage law" campaign in the early fifties, it had met large resistance from the peasantry because of the ideological remnants of the consanguineous family system, in which many children meant security for the parents in old age. Apparently, according to Edgar Snow, the party cadres were "overzealous" in their enthusiasm for the campaign, just as they had been during the marriage campaign. In addition, the cessation of the campaign came at about the same time as the development of communes, through which the State felt that it would be possible

to absorb a rapidly expanding population through collectivization. At the Eighth Party Congress in 1958, Mao Tse-Tung said, "Our rapidly expanding population is an objective fact and our asset." Liu Shao-Chi, at that time a top party leader, praised China's large population as a virtue. Birth control clinics were closed down and women were encouraged by the official press to reproduce.⁶² Irrespective of the reasons for the cessation of the campaign for birth control, the objective effect was to again deprive Chinese women of information and ready access to contraception.

After the Great Leap Forward failed to develop the capital base of the country in the early Sixties, China was faced with severe food shortages caused by crop failures, and with lack of consumer goods and a falling living standard, plus a tremendous population upsurge which promised to add 100 million people to the labor force by the late Sixties.⁶³ The Party again began to legitimize birth control. Chou En-lai said in this period: "Planned parenthood is conducive to raising the people's standard of living".⁶⁴ Old birth control clinics were reopened and advice on contraception was again available.

An important part of the program was agitation for late marriage. The number of marriages in 1966 was about the same as 1965 despite a 19 million population increase. Although the legal age for marriage was eighteen for women and twenty for men, the party tried to discourage marrying this early. At a Canton exhibition in 1965 the section on planned parenthood recommended marriage at 28-30 for a "better spouse, happier household and vastly superior production record". Abortion and sterilization, falling solely on the women, were also recommended.⁶⁵ Pressure was imposed by the state to limit the family size to two children (about five years before three had been considered to be the ideal family size) by giving a children's allowance only to the first two children, denying subsequent children clothing coupons, and denying the woman her two month paid maternity leave after the first two births.⁶⁶

WOMEN AND PRODUCTION

The important role that involvement in production can play in the liberation of women cannot be denied. Engels, in Origins of the Family, makes the following point:

the emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree. And this has become possible only as a result of modern large-scale industry, which not only permits of the participation of women in production in large numbers, but actually calls for it...⁶⁷

After the 1948 revolution, vast numbers of women were mobilized for productive work in both urban and rural areas. China Reconstructs claims that there were 1.3 million women employed in industry in 1953, a 128 % increase over 1950.⁶⁸ Other sources place the increase in total employed women in industry from 420,000 in 1949 to 1.9 million in 1954. The following tables give some indication of the increased use of female participation in the labor force.

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF FEMALE WORKERS

Year	Number (thous.)	Preceding Year Equals 100
1949	600	-
1952	1848	-
1953	2132	115.4
1954	2435	114.2
1955	2473	101.6
1956	3266	132.1
1957	3286	100.6
1958	7000	213.0

Source: Ten Great Years, State Statistical Bureau, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1960.

RATE OF INCREASE IN FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN LABOR FORCE -- 1950-1955

Peking	591.9%
Tiensten	177.7%
Shanghai	148.6%
Wuhan	264.8%

Source: China's Women Workers, All China Federation of Trade Unions, Peking

Although women were employed in industry before the revolution they were largely limited to the textile industry, which had had notoriously poor working conditions and wages. Since the revolution women have had access to most of the jobs traditionally held by men, including heavy labor. In the early 1950's, for example, 300,000 women took part in the Chinghiang Flood and Control Project in the Yangste. By the end of 1955, women constituted 14% of all workers and staff members in state enterprise. In the rural areas women made up one third of all workdays in agricultural production co-ops in 1954. Furthermore, on the co-operative farms throughout the middle fifties, it was required that the director or deputy director be a woman.⁶⁹

There is no doubt that the introduction of large numbers of women into production has meant tremendous social gain for them. Women were for the first time paid their own wages, giving them economic independence from their husbands and the opportunity to acquire an education and to gain technical skills and self-confidence. Before 1948, the difference between the literacy rate for men and women was vast: in a 1942-3 census of nine counties in Szechwan Province, 48% of the men and only 19% of the women were literate.⁷⁰ Legally, at least, women today receive equal pay and have access to the same jobs as men. Other social benefits the law has established for women are retirement at fifty (provided they have worked for twenty years) with a pension of 50-70% of former wages. Women are formally given eight weeks maternity leave (for the first two children) and thirty minutes off every four hours to suckle their

babies. Any woman who has a miscarriage after seven months of pregnancy is given a thirty-day leave.⁷¹

However, the introduction of women into production is viewed by the Communist Party as an end in itself and not as a pre-condition for women's liberation. The Party's propaganda apparatus constantly extols the virtue of production through articles like "How We Chinese Women Have Acquired Independence -- Work -- That's The True Key To Women's Liberation". Because participation in production by women is viewed as the totality of women's liberation, the stress is on "model workers" who equal or surpass men in a manner reminiscent of the Russian Stakhanovite. "Labor Heroine" and "model worker" awards are given to women who overfulfill production quotas.

The emphasis Chinese society places on liberation through participation in production and equalling or surpassing men at work has led Chinese women to move in the direction of trying to become replicas of men. Women emulate men in dress and style. Feminine dress, make-up, or any other values held to be "womanly" are regarded with contempt by the Chinese women. As Juliet Mitchell says in her article, "Women: the Longest Revolution":

In China, still another experience is being played out today. At a comparable stage of the revolution, all the emphasis is being placed on liberating women in production. This has produced an impressive social promotion of women. But it has been accompanied by a tremendous repression of sexuality and a rigorous puritanism (currently rampant in civic life).⁷²

Equal opportunity to work is certainly a pre-condition for liberation, but it is not an end in itself and is colored by the societal context within which it occurs. Certainly no one would claim that women were liberated by capitalism when the industrial revolution incorporated them into the workforce under the most cruel and exploitative conditions. Liberation of Chinese woman does not mean giving her an equal opportunity with men to be exploited for industrial development. Women in China now have the triple responsibility of worker, housekeeper and child-raiser, since the State will not spare scarce

capital in sufficient quantities to provide child care centers and collective housekeeping arrangements until the country has been further industrialized. Consequently, the toil of the Chinese woman has been heightened with her entrance into production.

Even as a pre-condition for total liberation, the Chinese woman's hold on her new role as productive worker is very tenuous and depends upon the state of production in any given period, just as in Western capitalist countries where women occupy the marginal section of the labor force and are the first to be fired when work is scarce. As unemployment spread in urban areas in the spring of 1957, there were proposals for sending some of the employed women back to the family in order to give jobs to unemployed men. Party propaganda in this period again stressed woman's role in the home and in childraising, extolling the "family woman":

If women who stay at home can encourage their husbands and children to take part in socialist reconstruction and educate their children to become members of the next shift in the work of socialist reconstruction, then their domestic service already contains revolutionary and social value and the salaries and income of their husbands and other family members already contains their own labor.⁷³

Only a few years before, Chinese women had been told that their only road to liberation was through participation in productive labor!

A further limit on women's participation in production, given the scarcity of capital and the priority placed upon heavy industry, is the fact that China cannot provide enough nurseries and childcare facilities to enable all women to work if they so choose (although there has been an impressive relative increase in social benefits as compared with the previous Nationalist regime). As a consequence, many women who are unable to find a place for the care of their children are unable to work. There are conflicting reports about the actual expense of existing nurseries. Women of China in the mid-sixties had several interviews with women workers who claimed that nurseries were very cheap. The women paid about 1% of their income, while the rest was paid for by the factory's welfare fund (it is unclear,

however, who supports the factory fund.) Lucy Jen Huang, who is admittedly hostile to the regime, claims that existing nurseries are often too expensive for working women, citing one instance of a nursery in an urban center which costs \$23 per month (far more than 1% of the average working woman's income) for each child, in addition to an initial \$70 to \$80 investment in personal possessions to meet the nurseries standards.⁷⁵ All sources agree that childcare facilities in urban areas are inadequate.

By 1956, reports started trickling down about discrimination against women by employers because of the additional expenses incurred through employing them. The Chinese economy is run on the basis of stringent quotas sent down from the Central Planning Agency to the factory manager. Both the job and salary of the factory manager are contingent on his ability to meet and surpass the quotas. Therefore any added expense or loss of worktime by employees seriously jeopardizes the manager's position. For this reason, managers are not anxious to hire women who receive a two month paid leave when they have children. Many women in fact do not get the full 56 day pregnancy leave (or even a large part of it) because of urgent production schedules, nor do they always get the allotted time to feed their babies. Because of the discrimination against pregnant women and the mystique about participation in production, many try to hide their pregnancy until the last minute: this, coupled with the strenuous work many women do, results in a large number of miscarriages.⁷⁷

When the Great Leap Forward started in 1958, women were again told that their liberation could come only through active participation in production. The following quotation is from a pamphlet put out by the Chinese Government to celebrate International Women's Day:

The Chinese women have urgently demanded to have their burden of family chores reduced and to take part in production, because the big leap forward in production and construction calls for a huge labour force and they realize that they can contribute more to the nation's socialist construction and achieve genuine equality with

men only by taking part in social labour.⁷⁷

Those who put production above all else were heralded at national heroine meetings of "model workers":

She forgot food and sleep, increasing the electric fan button up to ten times the previous record. Last year she completed the work of five workers.⁷⁸

THE COLLECTIVIZATION OF THE FAMILY

The Great Leap Forward increased the number of women in production from three million in 1957 to seven and one half million in 1958. In the cities, urban communes were initiated and run largely by housewives who were not otherwise employed, especially by older women. In order to release women from individual family and child care work, collectivized forms were initiated. In the Chengchow urban commune, public mess halls, nurseries, and wet-nursing stations were set up and shopping was done collectively. The center of the family became the neighborhood collective rather than the individual household during the last half of 1958. However by the end of the year the attempt to turn the urban communes into an integrated living and working community was abandoned because of resistance from the urban population or, in the words of the official sources, because of "bourgeois thought in the cities".⁸⁰ An article in a 1964 issue of Women of China indicates that women still have responsibility for their individual household and for their children:

Wu Lan-Ying works in a cotton textile mill in Peking, does family shopping and leaves her children at a kindergarten while she works.⁸¹

The net result of the communes was to build a small sector of neighborhood factories which still exist. (For a fuller discussion of the urban communes see Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China.)

In the rural areas the Great Leap Forward initiated

huge irrigation projects incorporating hundreds of thousands of workers to compensate for the lack of machinery. As a result there was a shortage of manpower to work the farms. Women now took over primary responsibility for farming while their husbands worked on irrigation and iron smelting. For women in the North, who had not done field work in the past, this represented a sharp break from tradition.

In order to release rural women for agricultural work, the communes initiated the collectivization of many household duties. Mammoth communal dining rooms were set up and childcare became a collective effort: in some cases children only saw their parents on weekends. Felix Greene reports, however, that in the commune he visited in the early 1960's, only about 40% of the children were actually provided for by nurseries and kindergartens, while the rest were cared for by their grandparents while the parents worked.⁸²

While the subject of socialization of children in Communist China is beyond the scope of this paper, it might be noted that the raising of children by their grandparents has created problems of discipline among the youth and was one of the reasons behind the Party's temporary return in 1957 to the emphasis on child-raising responsibility of women. The Communist Party hopes to eliminate this problem and still utilize its womenpower through collective childrearing in the communes.

If the communization experiment succeeds in the rural areas, this will signal a new stage in the development of the Chinese family structure, child rearing and household obligations becoming a collective rather than individual responsibility. Form, however, must not be mistaken for content. Collectivization of work which was historically performed by women is not, in itself, the answer to the liberation of women but is dependent upon the societal context within which it occurs. Just as collectivization of the means of production through nationalization does not, by itself, mean socialism. (Chang Kai-Shek was on his way towards complete nationalization of industry in the 1940's) The nationalization of industry has usually meant a more efficient method of control from the top in order to fit the economic development plans of the ruling class. Nationalization is only socialist when political

power is democratically controlled and not centralized in a ruling elite. Similarly, the mere presence of collectivized forms of household work or childcare in China does not necessarily mean that women are now liberated but rather that a more efficient method has been developed for utilizing women-power in the work force.

The latest indications are that Chinese women still assume responsibility, in the rural communes, for household work so that the collectivization and usurpation of family obligations is not as pervasive as originally planned. In Jan Myrdal's *Report From a Chinese Village*, his interview with a peasant woman in Li Yang Ching Commune in Yen-an, a more remote part of China, indicates the traditional division of labor between men and women still exists. In fact she says, "Women work more than men. We have two jobs: we work both in the field and in our caves."⁸³ Interviews with peasant women in *Women of China* also reveal that women on the rural communes still have responsibility for their home, as the following example shows:

Liu Yu Cheao is proud of the commune and holds dear the interests of the collective. She works well in the fields and is industrious and thrifty in the management of her home.⁸⁴

The final irony is the "ladies page" which appears in every issue of *Women of China*. The primary contents of the magazine are interviews with women extolling life under the new regime. However, near the end of each issue are recipes, handicraft lessons, and a child's story. In the first issue of 1965 is a lesson on embroidery and a recipe, plus the children's story, "The New Ball". In the second issue is a lesson about applique doily making, a recipe, and the children's story, "The Biggest Tomato of Them All".

Therefore, despite the regime's emphasis on collectivization it is clear that the commune has not displaced the individual family, in either urban or rural areas and that the centuries old division of labor still exists between "women's work" and "men's work".

CONCLUSION

The emancipation of women is neither an abstraction nor does that struggle take place in a vacuum: it is configured by the social struggles of the society. For centuries, Chinese women lived in a patriarchal society where they had an inferior social status and were, in fact, virtual slaves. The patriarchal hierarchy was itself based upon the broader social relations of the society and was a vital institution in its maintenance. The struggle of women against this tyrannical system is parallel to and coincidental with the struggle in the society for the breakup of the semi-feudal land relations and the rise of an industrial-based class. This development has its analogue in Western society with the break-up of feudalism and the subsequent rise in the position of women.

However, because of the nature of the development of the Chinese bourgeoisie in the epoch of imperialism, they were unable to carry through a successful revolution and in fact turned upon the only class capable of destroying the old society with which they were bound up -- the proletariat. Their way was cleared by the betrayal of the Chinese Communist Party which, under Stalin's orders, supported the Kuomintang until it turned upon them.

It was left to the Communist Party in later years, at the helm of a peasant-based fighting force, to finally destroy the old system and carry through the social revolution, which included the destruction of the patriarchal structured family. Women in China were then given equality under law and a greatly improved social and economic position. However, it would be a mistake to believe that this completes the emancipation of women as the Maoist regime claims. Equality with men is certainly a necessary requirement for emancipation but it is only one component, for without "freedom to choose" the liberation of women is not complete. Just as it is the unity of equality and freedom which defines socialism, similarly it is this unity which will signal the emancipation of women.

In China the liberation of women has now become

subordinate to the needs of the state and specifically to the industrialization of China. Although the old family structure has been broken, a new one has been fashioned with rigid rules for marriage, sexual behavior, child rearing and reproduction, as well as an accompanying ideology which defines the role of women in the society. Finally, the once dynamic women's movement, which played an important role in freeing Chinese women from the old forms of family tyranny has become a subordinate arm of the State.

The bourgeois revolution in Europe "freed" women so that they could be more easily exploited in accord with the needs of the new society. This was accomplished within the general context of freeing the plebian from the old serf relations so that he was able to become a worker. The "free" worker, made necessary by the capitalist mode of production, forms the basis of the destruction of that very mode.

So too in China the new society has "liberated" women so that they can be more easily exploited in the fashion dictated by a new and quite different mode of production and ruling class. The emancipation of women in China awaits a new social revolution in which the working class, conscious of its own ability to rule, conquers power in its own name. In such a revolution Chinese women through both their participation in a general workers movement and through their own independent movements will participate in the struggle and depend upon neither the Communist Party nor any other "condescending saviours" to bring about their liberation.

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IS PROGRAM IN BRIEF

We stand for socialism: collective ownership and democratic control of the economy through workers' organizations, established by a revolution from below and aimed toward building a classless society. We stand for an internationalist policy, completely opposed to all forms of class exploitation and in solidarity with the struggles of all oppressed peoples.

We believe in socialism from below, not dispensation from above. Our orientation has nothing in common with the various attempts to permeate or reform the ruling classes of the world, or with the idea that socialism will be brought to the masses by an elite. Socialism can only be won and built by the working class and all other oppressed people, in revolutionary struggle.

We oppose capitalism as a system of class exploitation and as a source of racial and imperialist oppression. In the interests of private profit and corporate power, it presents itself in the United States as a liberal/conservative "welfare state", based on a permanent war economy. It promotes unemployment, poverty and racism; it violently suppresses militant opposition. As an international system of imperialism, U.S. capitalism struggles to contain and absorb the colonial revolution, and continually deepens the underdevelopment of satellite economies.

I.S. is an activist organization which seeks to build a mass revolutionary movement in the United States, to train revolutionary socialists, and to develop socialist theory to advance that movement. We see ourselves, not as the revolutionary leadership, but as part of the process of developing it; we work toward the building of an American revolutionary socialist party -- a party, based on the working class, which can provide the leadership necessary for the revolutionary seizure of state power by the working class.

We regard the working class, female and male, black and white, blue collar and white collar, as potentially the leading revolutionary force in society. We see great promise in the new militancy of the labor movement, including the emergence of black workers' organizations.

The struggles of students and young people against imperialist wars, and against education and training designed to make them the agents or passive victims of oppression, likewise are shaking society. We participate in these struggles not only for their own sake, but also because they will help bring other sections of the population, including young workers into motion.

We are part of the international movement against imperialist exploitation and aggression. We support popular revolution against American domination, and fight for the withdrawal of American troops from all foreign lands. In Vietnam, we favor the victory of the NLF over the imperialists -- but we believe that the new regime will establish bureaucratic class rule, not a socialist society.

We believe that no existing regime can be called socialist. On a world scale, the "socialist" countries constitute a system of regimes and movements in different stages of development, but with a common ideology and social origin. In place of capitalism, this system has achieved, and now aims at, not the abolition of class society, but a new type of class system.

In some areas (e.g. France and Indonesia), the official Communist parties--both "Soviet" and "Chinese"--have held back mass energies, in a search for power through maneuvers at the top. Elsewhere, these movements have been able to organize immense popular energies in revolutionary opposition to the capitalist state; but the leadership of these movements does not organize the working class to seize power for itself, nor does it intend to establish a regime in which the masses themselves rule.

The revolutionary struggle expels capitalist imperialism and expropriates the native capitalist class, but the leadership aims at a social system in which that leadership constitutes a ruling class through its control of the state which owns the means of production, and through the repression of independent workers' organizations. Thus, where successful, these movements have placed in power, not the working class, but a self-perpetuating bureaucratic class.

Taking power in backward countries, these regimes have based their attempts to industrialize (successful or unsuccessful) on the crushing exploitation of workers and peasants. In all cases, popular discontent reappears, but the struggle of the masses cannot be carried forward through the ruling party, but only in revolutionary opposition to it. This system is no less class-ridden, and in its fully developed form (as in the USSR) no less imperialist than capitalism.

We support uncompromising struggles by rank and file forces against racism and bureaucratism in the labor movement, and against the subordination of the workers' interests to the demands of the state. In places of work, we fight to build workers' political consciousness, and to link their movement with the struggles of oppressed peoples in this society and internationally. We regard the development of a new radical party based on rank and file workers' organizations as a giant step in the political independence of the working class and in the coordination of all insurgent forces.

Workers, organized as a class, can stop bourgeois society dead in its tracks. More importantly, they can organize society on a new basis, that of revolutionary socialism. In the course of doing so, they will create new instruments of democratic power, just as the workers of Paris created the Commune in 1871, the workers of Russia the Soviets in 1905 and 1917, and the workers of Hungary the Workers' Councils in 1956. Our conception of socialism is bound up with such organizations, which embody workers' control of industry and the state.

We stand together with the struggles of black people and other oppressed minorities for liberation. We support armed self-defense, independent self-organization of the ghetto, and the right of self-determination for the black community. We look to a future coalition of black and white workers; however, blacks cannot allow their struggle today to be subordinated to the present level of consciousness of white workers.


We work to build the movement for women's liberation, both in society at large and within the radical movement. We support the formation of independent women's organizations, in which women will work out the organizational and programmatic forms of their struggles. Within these organizations, we push for an orientation towards organizing working class women.

Women's oppression is bound up with the exploitation of labor in all class societies; thus the struggle for women's liberation can only be won as part of a broader struggle for a socialist society. We do not counterpose women's participation in their own liberation movement to their participation in revolutionary socialist organizations. But women's liberation will not result automatically from socialist revolution; women must build their struggle now, and continue it after a revolution, if they are to be free under socialism. This struggle, like that of other oppressed peoples, will itself be one of the forces which will begin to shake the capitalist order.

In these countries we support and identify with the struggles—sometimes organized, more often not-of rank and file forces for their socialist birthright. We believe that socialism cannot be achieved in these countries without the overthrow of the ruling groups.

In all countries we advocate revolutionary struggles as sparks for the world revolution—it alone offers the solution to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, which cannot be overcome in the framework of a single country. But this internationalist perspective itself depends on the mass struggles for liberation in individual countries, whether against capitalist or bureaucratic regimes. In the bureaucratic states as under capitalism, SOCIALISM MEANS ONLY A REVOLUTION IN WHICH THE WORKING CLASS ITSELF OVERTHROWS ITS EXPLOITERS AND DIRECTLY RULES THE STATE.

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