

Abstract

This paper explores the constraints on women's emancipation in China. It also addresses women's status in the pre-revolutionary society, women's roles in, and their contribution to, the revolution, and the relationship between the socialist revolution and women's status in the post-revolutionary society.

Women's emancipation in China has been continuously constrained by ideological, historical and developmental factors. The political ideology of China views women's problems as peripheral to the proletarian struggle, and views feminism, which places women's concerns first, as evil and counter-revolutionary. The strategy of the Chinese communist revolution based on the peasantry rather than on the urban proletariat constitutes the historical constraint on women's emancipation. The liberation of women is also bound to the process of development: women's issues have been subordinated to the goals of development and their relative importance has changed over the years to accommodate development interests. As China progresses toward a more industrialized society, some of these constraints are likely to be alleviated. When these ideological, historical and developmental legacies are overcome, the movement for women's emancipation will be more meaningful and the effect more salient.

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WOMEN AND REVOLUTION IN CHINA: THE SOURCES OF CONSTRAINTS ON WOMEN'S EMANCI- PATION*

by

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Earlier studies of women in post-revolutionary China portrayed a remarkable improvement in women's social position. They took the optimistic view that orthodox Marxism as an ideology, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as its instrument, had made sweeping accomplishments in liberating women.¹ Many were led to believe that changes for women were one of the greatest miracles of the Chinese revolution. Since the late 1970s, however, this optimistic view has gradually dissipated. Recent studies have advanced the critical view that the Chinese socialist regime has failed to address woman issues (Andors 1983; Croll 1980; Johnson 1983; Stacey 1983; Wolf 1985). There seems to be considerable agreement that Chinese women have not been liberated in any fundamental way and that the CCP has not demonstrated a strong and sufficient commitment to women's liberation. This paper explores the constraints to women's emancipation in China by examining ideological, historical, and developmental perspectives. In so doing, it will also address such issues as women's status in the pre-revolutionary society, women's roles in, and their contribution to, the revolution, and the relationship between the socialist revolution and women's status in the post-revolutionary society.

The Ideological Constraint

In the tradition of classical Marxist theory, particularly the theory of Friedrich Engels, women's liberation evolves as a "natural consequence" of socialist revolution. Engels wrote: "The first requisite for the emancipation of women is that all women participate again in social labor; to achieve this, individual families are required to be no longer the units of the social economy" (cited in Andors 1975:35). In this view, the ultimate emancipation of women will ensue as the full-fledged classless society is built. Sexual equality results from economic liberation, and women's participation in economic production outside the home will therefore lead to their full emancipation. Mao embraced this idea when he said: "Only when a class society no longer exists and cumbersome labor and agriculture have been made automatic and mechanized, will it be possible to realize equality between the sexes" (cited in Leader 1973:65). As one scholar points out, Chinese women were told that "they would not be fully equal with men until China had achieved a communist society" and they were confronted with the fact that "their real equality had been postponed until the millennium" (Leader 1973:66).

Based on this basic tenet of Marxist theory, attempts to organize the masses around women's issues are seen as selfish and divisive to class solidarity. Thus, only bourgeois women confine themselves to the "woman question." Women in China should pursue the equality of men and women together rather than focusing on their status as women. Accordingly, feminism, which places women's concerns first, is evil and counter-revolutionary. Many leftist

women (as well as men) therefore opposed feminism as being selfish and bourgeois, and viewed women's problems as peripheral to the proletarian struggle. One of the most influential women during the revolutionary period, Xing Jiangyou, opposed feminists' struggle, and another revolutionary heroine, Cai Chang, also denounced feminism. According to Cai Chang, as a result of feminism:

Work suffers setbacks, the masses' experience isn't studied. Further feminism is putting on airs and insulting people . . . without giving aid to women's work This kind of subjectivism and formalism which lacks the masses' point of view on the way of work, especially in the area of women's work, means that in the long run feminists are not able to penetrate the masses of women.²

This ideological constraint discouraged the women's liberation movement in China, and may help to explain why the campaign to liberate Chinese women from traditional oppression has been left to the CCP whose goals and strategies have been defined by men.

The Historical Constraint

One aspect of the historical constraint on women's emancipation in China is that the strategy of the Chinese communist revolution was based on the peasantry rather than on the urban proletariat. As the CCP was forced to retreat to rural areas after the 1927 massacre, first to the South and later to the Northwest, the party mobilized the peasants and relied on them for a successful revolution. This fact has exerted an enormous impact on Chinese women as the CCP's efforts to change women's position encountered strong resistance from conservative peasants.

Ideological constraint and peasant resistance reduced women's participation in the revolutionary process and led to their exclusion from most leadership positions. Their participation in the revolution was so marginal that women leaders were not rewarded by popular support for changing the status of Chinese women after the revolution. For centuries, Confucian principles organized Chinese society in an elaborate social hierarchy in which women consistently lagged behind men. A woman remained subordinate to men throughout life: in youth, she followed the authority of her father; when married, she obeyed her husband; after her husband's death, she was subject to her son. Women were consequently powerless and dependent, both at home and in society. They suffered from foot-binding, female infanticide, and arranged marriages. They could not own property or work outside the home. Widows were not allowed to remarry, and were often expected to commit suicide to show loyalty to their husbands. Except for a small group of women from important families, all Chinese women suffered from these traditional patterns of oppression.

The Western influence of the nineteenth century, however, led to sporadic attempts to improve women's lot--particularly by educated, upper-class women. The women's movement gained momentum by the early 20th century, especially after the 1911 revolution that ended the one thousand-year-old feudal system. Women supported the establishment of a republic hoping that the new republic would pass legislation to improve their position in society. The first woman martyr during the period, Chiu Chin, was one of the early upper-class feminists. She established the first feminist newspaper and became the first woman to die for the revolution. Women's groups formed a Woman Suffrage Alliance asking that political equality between men and women be included in the Provisional Constitution. When their efforts failed, angry supporters stormed the parliament demanding women's political rights.

Although the Alliance failed to gain substantial support, the movement reappeared seven years later. During the 1919 May Fourth Movement,³ demands for women's rights rapidly increased. These demands gave birth to feminist groups such as the Association for the Collective Advancement of Women and the Association for the Promotion of Women's Education (Leith 1973:48). Through these groups, women demanded the right to vote, to own property, to be educated, to marry freely, and to be elected to office. All forms of feudal oppression (including the traditional family) came under heavy attack and, by 1922, educated upper-class feminists had developed more feminist organizations on a national scale: the Women's Suffrage Organization focused on women's political rights and the Women's Rights League demanded legal equality between the sexes (Leith 1973:49). In the meantime, the CCP was formed in 1921. The second CCP Congress, held in 1922, issued a proclamation for women's rights and established a special women's bureau. At the same time, the CCP appointed Xing Jiangyou as the first woman member of the CCP Central Committee (CC) in the second Congress and, in 1923, appointed her the first director of the new women's bureau.⁴ The CCP was keenly aware of women's oppression. Mao himself wrote several essays on women and the family, and spoke in favor of reforms in this area. As the CCP and the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) formed the first United Front (1923-1927) against the warlord government, they set up a Women's Department headed by He Xingning of the KMT. The department formed women's unions and set up union locals in the countryside to educate and mobilize women. By 1924, women began to celebrate International Women's Day (March 8).

During this period, prominent CCP women, Xing Jiangyou, Cai Chang (Xing's sister-in-law), and Deng Yingchao (Zhou Enlai's wife) helped organize over 1.5 million women toward the creation of the Women's Department. Both urban feminists and revolutionaries worked together to train rural recruits and, according to Johnson (1983), for the first and last time, politically independent women's organizations advocated marriage reform.

The coalition between the CCP and the KMT broke apart in 1927 during the "white terror." The KMT forced the CCP out of the urban areas and executed more than a thousand women activists, including Xing Jiangyou, as suspected communists (Stacey 1975:75). After the split, the KMT, largely in response to bourgeois pressure, adopted a legal code in 1930 that guaranteed women equal inheritance rights and, in 1933, revised the criminal code to provide for freedom of marriage and monogamy. Yet, with the New Life Movement in 1934 calling for a revival of Confucian values, little effort was made to enforce the new codes. While many urban women still supported the KMT, KMT women activists such as He Xingning and Song Qingling (the widow of Sun Yat-sen), eventually turned to women's groups sponsored by the CCP.

The CCP had been forced to retreat to the countryside following its defeat, where the women's movement had no base and women's equality became obscured. In 1928, the sixth CCP Congress resolution on the Peasant's Movement recognized that failure to win over the women in the villages would result in the failure of the agrarian revolution (Maloney 1980:167). Thus, in order to mobilize women as a major revolutionary force, the CCP began to organize women's associations again and appointed Deng Yingchao as the director of the Women's Department. The Constitution of the Soviet Republic of Jiangxi, adopted in 1931, expressly stated that the purpose of the government was "to guarantee the thorough emancipation of women," and to create the conditions for women's participation in the "social, economic, and political and cultural life of the entire society" (Maloney 1980:170). Throughout the period the CCP experimented with reforms of the marriage law, and introduced a land reform law that would grant women important property and economic rights. Under its first marriage law in 1931, women became entitled to free-choice marriage, divorce, and custody of their children. In addition, a political and economic quota system for women was established so that, as the party said in 1930, "every local party should do its best to reach the goal set up by the Central Committee which requires that women comrades in the movement should occupy one-third to two-thirds of the party positions."⁵ During the Jiangxi Soviet, women gained favorable legislation designed to enhance their lot, and undoubtedly these measures aroused widespread resistance from peasant men.

As the KMT encircled the Jiangxi revolutionary base, the CCP began its Long March in 1934, arriving at Yen'an in 1936. Meanwhile, at the Zunyi Meeting in January 1935, Mao established his leadership as the CCP chairman. But the party's policy toward women was marked by inconsistency. The Sino-Japanese War required women to leave their homes for production activities, yet the conservative tradition of the Yen'an area made this difficult.

During the second United Front (1937-1945) against Japan, the CCP was forced to retreat from liberalizing policies that exposed men and women to the idea of promoting women's rights. Land and

family reform policies were relaxed, and attacks on that trend were criticized as divisive. After the defeat of Japan in 1945, however, the CCP reinstated land and marriage reforms in the liberated zones and, in 1948, issued a new resolution encouraging women to struggle against their inferior status (Stacey 1975:77). The well-known "speak bitterness" sessions were organized and for the first time, women were encouraged to express their anger in public. As one scholar put it, "women, who for most of their lives had been required to stay indoors, denied all forms of social contact, were to be seen . . . dragging well-known women-oppressors to the women's headquarters and forcing out of them unheard-of public self-criticisms and often giving them revengeful floggings" (Chan 1974:198-199).

Although the Chinese women's movement greatly expanded women's rights in economic, social and political arenas, women's participation in the revolution was not significant enough to affect women's status in post-revolutionary Chinese society. From the first CCP congress in 1921 to the seventh in 1945, only two women were named as full members of the Central Committee (Xing Jiangyou in 1922 and Cai Chang in 1928 and 1945).⁶ Women leaders who did manage to rise to the party hierarchy were confined to the women's department which was given a low priority in party activity, and thus power in it meant little (Leith 1973:67). Moreover, Leith (1973:66) reports that only about twenty women were influential in the communist movement in the 1920s.

Women's participation in the military, which was one of the most vital sources of CCP leadership, was virtually nil. In his theory of social inequality, Lenski (1966) identifies three sources of power influencing inequality in society: the power of property (economic power), the power of position, and the power of force. Chinese women during the revolution never gained the power of force, although they were granted some economic and political rights. There were revolutionary heroines and fighters, but only about a fifth of the over fifty thousand who joined the Long March were women (Salaff and Merkle 1970:182).

The Women's Independence Battalion, a 2,000 member armed unit, was organized in 1933; yet, except for a handful of commanders and veteran revolutionaries such as Zhang Qinqiu and Tao Wanrong, most of the woman soldiers were young and inexperienced (Women of China 1986:27). Although they were allowed to join the army, as Salaff and Merkle (1970:182) point out, they did not do the actual fighting and they never gained control of the means of coercion which could have guaranteed their power. Given the fact that the CCP and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) were virtually identical in the early years of the CCP, it is clear that the leadership of the revolutionary period was monopolized by men. A handful of women revolutionaries played a part in the leadership hierarchy, but their sheer lack of power was bound to have a serious impact

despite their contribution to mobilizing rural women for revolution through the women's department and various women's associations.

In accounting for the absence of female leadership and power during the revolutionary period, one historical event in the Chinese communist movement deserves close attention: the "white terror" of 1927. After this, the CCP was forced to abandon its urban proletarian strategy as it moved from the cities to the countryside. The new peasant-based strategy made liberal policies promoting women's rights more difficult because male peasants, who felt their patriarchal rights threatened, vigorously resisted such policies, fearing the loss of their purchased wives and their property. Their conservatism and their interests made it very difficult for them to tolerate free-choice marriage, divorce, female equality, and women's roles outside the home. From the party's viewpoint, urban working women who shared with men the economic oppression of capitalism, were easily organized into the class struggle. Peasant women, who saw their oppression as a sexist practice, were not (Leith 1973:65).

The shift to a peasant base for the revolution foreshadowed the future direction of female emancipation. Many studies of Chinese women emphasize the relationship between kinship structure and women's oppression, and view the patriarchal family as the real source of inequality between men and women (e.g., Andors 1983; Johnson 1983; Stacey 1983). Nevertheless, these studies argue, instead of abolishing patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal organization to achieve gender equality, the regime actually reinforced these structures to win over the male peasant base. According to Stacey (1983:108), the communists deliberately "rescued peasant family life from the precipice of destruction" in order not to alienate the rural patriarchs whose support was crucial. As a result, instead of creating a "new democratic family," the CCP came to see the emergence of the "new democratic patriarchy." Through land reform, patriarchy was democratized as land ownership was transferred from an elite class of patriarchs to a vast number of poor male peasants. Agricultural collectivization was organized around existing kinship clusters which further secured patriarchy. Thus, the CCP's collaboration with the peasants made it difficult to launch a frontal attack on the patriarchal family and, whenever there was a conflict between women's rights and poor peasants, the CCP chose the latter. Johnson (1983) and Andors (1983) agree with Stacey and argue that the CCP never had a strong commitment to women's emancipation. They view the lack of priority given to gender equality as intentional because male peasants' support was so crucial to revolutionary success.

This historical legacy seriously constrained women's leadership and participation in the revolution. It also shaped the setting within which women's rights were handled in the post-revolutionary period. As Salaff and Merkle (1970) note, women were

not organized as women during the revolutionary period. The absence of a women's power bloc resulted in a post-revolutionary "star system" in which individual women were promoted as "symbols of the fulfillment of revolutionary promises rather than a substantial commitment to end the oppression of women as a category" (Salaff and Merkle 1970).

The Developmental Constraint

In addition to the ideological and historical legacies, the liberation of women in China is also bound to the process of political development. The legitimacy of a regime in any political system is affected by its capacity to meet the changing goals of development. In China, as its developmental goals have changed over the years, policies concerning women have been adjusted to legitimate the regime and help it to achieve its goals. Women's issues have thus been subordinated to developmental interests and their relative importance has changed over the years to accommodate China's development.

To examine China's development process⁷ and the constraints on women generated from it, an examination of a paradigm of political development is in order. Han S. Park's (1984) paradigm of political development draws from the Maslowian concept of need-hierarchy which states that human needs are ordered systematically according to their relative urgency for the survival of the organism itself and for the human social community.⁸ Thus, a given level of need does not emerge as the primary motivational basis of an individual's behavior until she/he is satisfied with, and is confident of, her or his continued ability to meet the prior levels of need.

Under these assumptions, Park conceptualizes a needs hierarchy as it is manifested in political demand made upon a regime: 1) survival, 2) belongingness, 3) leisure, 4) control. The most essential requirement in this hierarchy is physical survival--that is, to ensure adequate food, shelter, clothing, and security from physical threat. Once this most fundamental need is sufficiently ensured, a person will pursue the next need, psychological belongingness. This need includes a desire for subjectively meaningful interpersonal relationships, including family ties, and a sense of belonging to a community of friends and to a broader political community. With the survival need attained and the need to belong to a community satiated, human beings strive for leisure. Finally, with these three needs sufficiently satisfied, people pursue more resources in order to seek relative gratification in relation to other people: control need.

The fact that human needs have an incremental structure does not mean that all needs will be achieved for every person. This happens only if lower level needs are well secured and maintained.

If this is not the case due to a single-minded effort to pursue only the emergent new needs, one might be forced to recoup resources to satisfy a more basic need before continuing to seek the satisfaction of higher level needs. Thus, the process of reaching the goal of satisfying all human needs is not necessarily unilinear.

Because it is the task of a regime to design and implement a complex set of policies and programs that facilitate the continuous satisfaction of a given level of need, the political dimensions of the corresponding human needs also constitute hierarchical stages. At the lowest level, the need for survival is manifest most often in the situation where a new nation-state is formed or a new regime in an already existing nation-state is emerging. Such times are often characterized by internal instability or external warfare. Thus the very survival of the members of the society may be endangered. Under these conditions, people will naturally seek a regime which can most effectively restore social stability and normal economic activity, irrespective of the type of government. The regime's task in this stage is referred to as "regime formation."

In the second stage, in order to cope with the need to belong, the governmental task focuses on the integration of the political system. As people's needs shift from survival to belonging, a regime seeks to build ideological consensus on policies and policy orientations. It is in this stage that the regime appeals most strongly to the sentiments, beliefs, and other normative qualities of the governed. If the regime succeeds in political integration, and serious challenges to basic survival for the majority continue to be avoided or repelled, members of the society will turn to material acquisition and leisure. The government, in turn, contributes to this rising expectation for leisure activities by fostering industrialization and other forms of resource expansion. Finally, as people seek relative gratification, the government has no way of satisfying everyone in society because the gratification of one requires the deprivation of another. In this zero-sum situation, all the government can do is to manage social competition and conflict and try to ameliorate its effects.

This conceptual scheme was developed as a paradigm of political development. If these needs are universal and provide the motivational basis of human behavior in all societies, they constitute the basis upon which a regime can build its legitimacy. This hierarchy of needs will be applied to analyze the Chinese case.

The Regime Formation Period (1949-1953)

In proclaiming the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong declared the principal tasks of the new nation to be the consolidation of the socialist regime and the establishment

of an orderly authority structure under CCP rule. In order to ensure the basic survival needs of the population, the regime conducted a comprehensive land investigation and reform. Aiming to rehabilitate agricultural productivity and eventually collectivize agriculture, the regime had confiscated about 47 million hectares of land and completely eliminated the landlord class by 1952.

At the same time, because the communist revolution was intended to change the traditional social structure and liberate those who were oppressed under the traditional society (including women and peasants), the new regime incorporated this task into the regime formation process. It identified family law and land reform as keys to social change, and thus instituted the Marriage Law and Land Reform Law of 1950. The Marriage Law emphasized equal rights, the right to free-choice marriages and divorce. It explicitly rejected "the arbitrary and compulsory feudal marriage system, which is based on the superiority of man over woman" (Stacey 1975:81). It ended arranged marriages, polygamy, concubinage, buying and selling of women, child betrothal, and infanticide, and granted men and women the right to divorce, remarriage, property, and inheritance. The Land Reform Law granted women equal allotments of land. The Chinese government reported that in the beginning, 60 million women acquired land equally with men in Central and Eastern China alone (Curtin 1974:25). More than 3 million CCP cadres were trained to implement the new laws. In addition, a mass organization for women, the All China Democratic Women's Federation, was established in April 1949 to unite the women's movement under the CCP.

The marriage law soon received tremendous resistance from both men and older women. It came to be known as the "divorce law," and resulted in an estimated 70,000 to 80,000 suicides and murders of women between 1950 and 1953. Although the campaign was seen as a key to changing the old social structure, establishing a new order, and winning significant popularity for the regime among women, the militant policy also threatened the family institution and thereby threatened the regime's stability. The Government Administration Council's Directive Concerning the Thorough Enforcement of the Marriage Law of 1953 noted that the death of women "is not only an offense against the equality of the rights of women and their freedom of marriage, but it also affects solidarity among the people, and it badly affects national production and construction and the whole social order" (Leader 1973:62). As a result of the severity of popular reactions, the government chose to relax its tactic, and encouraged mediation to resolve family problems.

The First Five Year Plan (1953-1957) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960)

The "regime formation" period in China was primarily a time of economic rehabilitation designed to resume pre-war productivity in

agriculture and industry. Economic reconstruction was a high priority for survival of the regime. In fact, the regime was fairly tolerant of private enterprise during this period in order to avoid disrupting agricultural production by applying excessively drastic socialist measures (see Table 1). Mao (1945 in Kraus 1982:13) stated:

China's greatest postwar need is economic development Neither the farmer nor the Chinese people as a whole are ready for socialism. They will not be ready for a long time to come. It will be necessary to go through a long period of private enterprise, democratically regulated.

In 1947, Mao further said, "Even after the country-wide victory of the revolution, it will still be necessary to permit the existence for a long time of a capitalist sector of the economy" (in Kraus 1982:15).

In 1953 the Chinese leadership prepared to launch its major effort to achieve political integration. As alluded to earlier, ideology plays a very important role at this stage of development. It becomes a mechanism by which a government seeks to institutionalize a belief system in the populace upon which the people's sense of belonging and their loyalty to the regime is built. A regime provides a program of socialization and political integration to generate a belief system that can be shared by as many members of the society as possible and can serve to bind them together psychologically. Ideology provides a common political belief system, the psychological basis for the individual's sense of belonging in the broader political community.

Having consolidated its regime, the leadership, which had up to then been fairly tolerant of private enterprise, began to accelerate the process of nationalizing the remaining private industry as well as trade and transportation, and collectivizing agriculture through cooperatives. Its goal, the socialist transformation of ownership of the means of production, became reality by the end of the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957). At the end of 1957, 98 percent of all peasant households were combined in cooperatives; and the share of total retail trade turnover of private trading firms had declined sharply to 2.7 percent (SSB 1960:40).

At the same time, the government attempted to mobilize intellectuals and other elite groups because, if alienated, they could serve as a counter-ideological force which would pose a persistent impediment to regime-led political integration. Chinese policies to induce cooperation of the intellectuals and win their support were typified by the slogan, "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend," (1956) under the presumption that the socialist construction of a rich and powerful

China could never really flourish if only one flower bloomed alone, no matter how beautiful that flower might be.⁹ Freedom of independent thinking and debate was guaranteed at least temporarily by the "hundred flowers" doctrine, and even demonstrations and strikes protesting government policies were regarded as legitimate.

However, many of the flourishing ideas and cultural activities of the intellectuals turned out to be a broad wave of anti-communist criticism which did not remain within the boundaries of acceptable diversity. Fearing that it could lead to instability for the system itself, the regime changed its integration strategy in the ensuing years. As the attempt to integrate mass belief systems through winning and mobilizing intellectuals failed, the regime inaugurated the Great Leap Forward (GLF) to strengthen political integration through the revolutionary ardor of the masses. Attacks were made on intellectuals, and ideological education and political consciousness were given renewed emphasis.

During the political integration period, the focus of women's policy also shifted from achieving equality and liberation from traditional oppression (which would help establish a new regime) to Engels's concept on "liberation through labor." The purpose was to inject socialist ideas that women's emancipation would be achieved only through loyalty to the regime's task of building a socialist China. Through a socialist ideology that could be shared by both men and women, people's belief systems could be integrated, and thus, the goal of the regime at this stage would be achieved. Accordingly, it was claimed that women had already achieved liberation because the groundwork for equality had been laid in the law. Women were told to turn their energies to productive work to help build socialist China. The regime admitted, however, that housework would not be socialized for many years, despite Lenin's dictum that although participation in labor is a necessary condition of female emancipation, the real emancipation will begin "only where and when an all-out struggle begins against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins" (1966:63-64 cited in Andors 1976:23). The Chinese leadership merely encouraged women to keep a balance between housework and productive labor.

With the launching of the GLF, housework began to be socialized through mess halls, nurseries, and laundries in the communes to free women for productive labor. By 1958, women accounted for more than one-half of the agricultural labor force. In 1959, People's Daily claimed that nearly 100 percent of rural women engaged in agriculture or other productive labor in the communes. At the same time, women's participation in public and political affairs was encouraged:

Women's federations must assist the cooperatives in training women backbone elements so that a woman director or deputy director is appointed in every cooperative and

a woman chief or deputy chief is found in every production squad. Women members, women deputy chiefs, women technicians and women bookkeepers should be increased and promoted every year in the management committees and control committees of the cooperative (NCNA 1956 cited in Andors 1969:35).

The eighth CCP Congress convened in 1956 and named four women as full members of the CC and an additional four as alternatives. This was a drastic increase given the fact that from the first to the seventh Congress, only two women had been named as full members of the CC. The same trend was found at lower levels: local women deputies of the People's Congress increased from 10 percent in 1951 to 20 percent of 1956; two-thirds of the Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives (APCs) had women deputies or full directors in 1957 (Curtin 1974:34).

Women were also increasingly encouraged to take on more economic, social and political roles in an effort to integrate the society through socialist ideology. Although socialization of housework remained limited, and women had to take on "double burden," they could acquire economic independence through paid labor, become socially active, hold responsible public positions, and assume new non-traditional roles.

C. The Adjustment Phase (1961-1965)

The GFL's efforts to achieve political integration failed. Socialist values and ideas were vigorously implemented, but the economic consequences were catastrophic. Exacerbated by the sudden withdrawal of Soviet technicians from China, the first signs of trouble appeared in November 1958, when it became apparent that the communes had not fully attained the desired objectives. Losses through the neglect of harvests were estimated at 1.5 million yuan, and peasant intransigence was regarded as the main source of the disasters. Absenteeism was high, production became crippled, and peasants began to complain about living quarters, low wages, poor and inadequate food, and the breaking up of the traditional solidarity of the family. Peasants in Honan, for example, attributed 30 percent of the food shortage crisis of that time to natural disasters and 70 percent to human factors (Ahn 1975:634). In the fall of 1959, grain production fell to 250 million tons from 375 million tons in 1958, and agricultural production continued to fall in 1960. Very severe food shortages swept China in 1960-1961. Industrial production also declined 42 percent from 1960-1961 (JEC 1978:208).

At the same time, the drastic reorganization of conventional social structures which was necessitated by collectivization placed great stress on the extended family system, creating a great deal of turmoil and instability. Social instability and political

unrest were further aggravated by the discontent of many party leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping who, in the wake of the collapse of the GLF, criticized Mao's integration strategy and the way in which the government had implemented revolutionary ideals. By 1960, the deterioration of economic conditions in general, and the agrarian depression in particular, made Mao's leadership position precarious, threatening the very foundation of the regime. Mao was forced to recognize the gravity of the economic situation and accept the inevitability of dismantling the GLF. A complete alteration resulted leading to the end of the GLF.

The first goal of the adjustment was to restore the social stability vital to the survival of the regime. To secure basic needs and regime stability, the leadership attached primary importance to the development of agriculture. Confronted with acute food shortages which had spread to the cities, the Central Work Conference of 1960 facilitated a decision to abandon "walking on two legs" (the simultaneous development of industry and agriculture) and adopt a more realistic formulation: the "agriculture first" policy, mobilizing all available resources to support agriculture. Agriculture was viewed as the foundation of the national economy while industry shifted to the status of the "leading factor." Thus, "all the people to agriculture and food grains" became a nation-wide slogan in 1960.

This "reverse development,"¹⁰ which pulled the regime back to the first stage, inevitably changed policy concerning women. With the deterioration of the economy the first institutional reforms to be relinquished were the socialized services that freed women for labor outside the home. To shore up the stability of the regime, stable family life began to be reemphasized and women were encouraged to serve the nation as homemakers and not as production heroines. Women's magazines featured articles on raising children, choosing a husband, and doing housework.¹¹

D. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1970)

As the chaos of the GLF diminished and the regime recovered its stability, Mao tried to reverse the retreat from socialism by launching another massive campaign, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR, CR hereafter). It had its origins in the Socialist Education Movement (SEM) initiated at the tenth CC plenum held in September 1962, and was intended to push Chinese society once again toward greater integration. Popular reactions to the GLF convinced Mao that it was necessary to emphasize political education to eliminate the remnants of any Confucian norms and values. Although Mao was proud of Chinese culture Confucian norms such as family-oriented (rather than state-oriented) authority, and the belief that man should obey the forces of nature rather than dominate it, were viewed under socialism as detrimental to the complete reorganization of the society. During the GLF,

collectivization beyond the extended family had met serious mass resistance. Mao thus believed it necessary to change the mentality of the Chinese people, and the CR, which began in 1966, was indeed designed to do just that.

The CR had a profound impact on policy concerning women. To integrate China, the elimination of the gaps between intellectual and physical work, between workers and peasants, between the city and the countryside, and between men and women was thought to be necessary. In a pamphlet entitled, Between Husband and Wife, it was argued that the husband-wife relationship was "first of all comradely relations" and the feelings between them are "primarily revolutionary sentiments" (Leader 1973:70). Husbands were urged to change their traditional values and behavior to become a "new type of man" who would prepare to meet the demands of a new society by regarding his wife as a revolutionary comrade. Men and women were encouraged to do the same type of work, wear the same clothes, use the same title ("comrade," instead of Mr. or Mrs.), and allow a woman's surname to be the family name (Li 1988:124).

At the same time, severe attacks were made on the "reactionary bourgeois authorities" in the party such as Liu Shaoqi and Tung Pien (Senior editor of Women of China) who were taking the "capitalist road" by advocating special interests of women. Liu was accused of emphasizing feminists' issues and neglecting the political work of women as a revolutionary force in the class struggle. Tung Pien was also denounced as a "black gang element":

[Her views] were intended to create ideological confusion so that women cadres and women staff and workers would be intoxicated with the small heaven of motherhood, bearing children, and managing family affairs, and sink into the quagmire of the bourgeois "theory of human nature," forgetting class struggle and disregarding revolution. This is an echo of the reactionary themes advocated by modern revisionism, such as "feminine tenderness," "mother love" and "human sentiments" . . . (Women of China 1966 in Salaff and Merkle 1970:187).

Women's magazines attacked traditional marriage norms and stressed women's participation in the economic and political sector, describing women as equal revolutionary agents.

The renewed emphasis on political and economic work by women resulted in increased female leadership positions. The ninth Congress of the CCP adopted quotas for female party membership in 1969. Women who were full members of the CC increased to 7.6 percent (from 4.2 percent in the previous congress) (Maloney 1980:172), and the first two women were appointed to the CCP Politburo: Jiang Qing (Mao's wife) and Yeh Chun (Lin Biao's wife). Even though their rise to the Politburo was attributed to marriage rather than to their independent political achievements, in the

lower echelons of power women increasingly assumed leadership positions based on their political activities and their reputations as successful workers. From 1966-1973, one-fourth of all party recruits were female (Maloney 1980:172).

E. Consolidation and the Gang of Four (1971-1976)

The second great effort to promote political integration was also a disaster. Mao himself acknowledged that "the Great Cultural Revolution wreaked havoc after I approved Nieh Yuan-tzu's big-character poster . . . I myself had not foreseen that as soon as the Peking University poster was broadcast (on June 1, 1966) the whole country would be thrown into turmoil . . . Since it was I who caused the havoc, it is understandable if you have some bitter words for me."¹² As a consequence of the continued struggle between the revolutionary forces of the mostly young Red Guards who sought power and the old guards of the party who made forceful resistance, many cities experienced great chaos which eventually penetrated all segments of society. This increasing chaos along with the disintegration of party and governmental institutions which produced power vacuums endangered the security and safety of people's daily lives. Here again, regime stability, the most basic need of a political community, was at stake. Responding to these circumstances, the post-CR leadership introduced drastic measures to restore regime stability. The frightening ideological storm was replaced by pragmatism emphasizing the forces of production rather than ideological activism, and urging the consolidation of the socio-economic base and the restoration of law and order. As a result, the dominant theme of the CR, "politics can overrule everything else," was repudiated as a fallacy cynically promoted by "swindlers like Liu Shaoqi."

As the aftermath of the CR subsided, regime stabilization became more visible. During the 1973-1976 period, however, the extreme left "Gang of Four" tried to spark a new cultural revolution to return the regime to a more radical path toward national integration. With the 1973 "Campaign to Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius," the regime resumed the unfinished task of the CR: to change the mentality of the Chinese people through political education in such a way that any remnants of Confucian norms and values would be eliminated. Lin Biao, just like Liu Shaoqi, was attacked for imposing Confucian norms on the masses in order to undermine the proletarian dictatorship and restore capitalist roads.

The campaign, which soon spread to women's issues, argued that the incorrect Confucian theory had imposed the three obediences on women (to fathers, husbands, and sons), and that this male supremacy principle of Confucianism was responsible for the oppression of, and discrimination against, women. Women were strongly urged to participate in the campaign, and their

participation was viewed as the chief guarantee of its success. Women were thus mobilized into nation-wide study groups to identify the origins of their oppression and to criticize them. The result would be to enhance women's consciousness. It was argued that as long as women subscribed to Confucian ideology, equality between men and women would not be possible. Although women "hold up half the sky," according to Women of China (November 1, 1960 in Croll 1977:592), "without self-awareness a woman will be unwilling to fly though the sky is high." The campaign stressed that not only women but also men should stop believing and living as though women were men's slaves:

Men comrades should offer to share a portion of the household chores from the standpoint of equality, to enable women comrades to participate properly in social revolution and social construction.¹³

The tenth CCP Congress (1973) also featured a big increase in the number of women in the CC: 20 full members (10%) and 21 alternates (16%), the most since the first congress in 1921. The same trend was found in the National People's Congress (NPC) which convened in 1975. Twenty-three percent of the deputies were women compared to 12 percent in the first (1954) and second (1959) NPCs, and 18 percent in the third (1964). The number of women members of standing committees (42) was also the highest at 25 percent.

F. Great Leap into Resource Expansion

With the death of Mao Zedong and the subsequent purge of the "Gang of Four" in October 1976, calls for a new cultural revolution came to a halt. China's third attempt at integration had failed, and a pragmatic new leadership brought rapid change in all policy areas. The ambitious program of the "Four Modernizations" was intended to go beyond recovering economic losses caused by the "sabotage and interference" of the Gang.

China now launched itself into the third stage of political development, resource expansion. To achieve rapid industrialization, the new leadership set aside the unfulfilled task of political integration and opted for resource expansion despite the incomplete integration of the political system.¹⁴ Given the negative results of their previous integration strategies, the Chinese leadership shifted its efforts to achieve political integration to less ideologically drastic ways by emphasizing its goal of industrialization. Thus, the present leadership modified its ideological stance toward market socialism by combining a market mechanism with state planning in order to facilitate industrialization, without necessarily following the road of socialist integration.

Since 1978 the Chinese regime has introduced reforms in every aspect of the economy including industry, agriculture, and foreign trade. It has granted more autonomy to enterprises, integrated market forces with the state plan, decentralized foreign trade activities, and introduced a system of contract responsibility in agriculture. Although many reforms resulted in troublesome consequences and suffered from factional disputes between radical reformists (associated with Zhao Ziyang) and conservative reformists (such as Li Peng), after the Tiananmen Square incident in June 1989 the new General Secretary, Jiang Zemin, announced that there would be no change in reform policy. Radical reform measures such as price reform were delayed but there were no fundamental changes in reform principles.

The implications of these new policies for women are double-tiered. Although women would benefit from overall economic progress, the agricultural contract responsibility system and the expansion of side-line production emphasize the family as an economic unit. As many recent studies have pointed out (Andors 1983; Croll 1980, 1983; Honig and Hershatter 1988; Johnson 1983; O'Sullivan 1985; Stacey 1983; Wolf 1985), this has driven rural women back into the household. Under the contract system, an individual household is allotted communal land for cultivation through a long-term contract with the production team which assigns production quotas to member farmers. After submitting the amount specified in its contract, the household is allowed to retain the surplus for personal consumption or for sale. The mobilization of labor under rural heads of household means that rather than being independent wage earners, rural women work at home. They receive no wages, are socially and economically less active, are ineligible for welfare benefits awarded to state workers, and are subordinate to male heads of household. This system also reinforces the preference for male children for the labor force and, along with the one-child-family policy, encourages female infanticide in the countryside. Furthermore, the demise of agricultural communes brought a retreat from the socialization of housework and increased the double burdens of women. In rural areas, young school girls are reported to leave school early to help with housework and childcare (Wolf 1985:126-133).

At the same time, although women benefit from increased employment opportunities, in urban areas, enterprises remain reluctant to hire women workers, especially because industrial reform introduced competition among enterprises. Competition was previously prohibited because it was regarded as a capitalist concept; now, however, it is encouraged in order to motivate enterprises to reform and reorganize. This shift to competition directly affects women because they are assumed to be less productive due to absences related to maternity and childcare, and to be more costly due to paid maternity leave and expenses for women's welfare facilities. The new job contract system, which

undermined the "iron rice bowl" tradition of secure jobs, threatens women with the prospect of unemployment.

According to a poll done in 1987, of the 660 polled enterprises, 64 percent of the industrial laborers to be laid off were women (Beijing Review 1988c:19). In Shanghai, 70 to 80 percent of the unemployed youth in 1984 were women (Honig and Hershatler 1988:246). Women were even blamed for causing urban unemployment, and eliminating women from the workforce was often proposed as a solution (Honig and Hershatler 1988:252). In recruitment, some work units required higher qualifying examination scores for women than for men to qualify for the same job (Honig and Hershatler 1988:245). Women were also encouraged to quit their jobs voluntarily while receiving 60-70 percent of their salary and to take "prolonged maternity leaves" which granted 75 percent of salary but no fringe benefits, bonuses, or special subsidies (Honig and Hershatler 1988:253-254). With the increase in the number of household enterprises and the spread of "putting out," in which enterprises contract women to work in their homes, increasing numbers of women are engaged in home-based production activities. Thus, industrial reform has adversely affected women's status as enterprises are granted more discretion to discriminate against women.

In the political arena, the 12th party congress in 1982 elected one woman, Chen Muhua, as an alternate member of the Political Bureau and another, Hao Jianxiu, to the CC Secretariat. The 13th congress in 1987 elected no woman to either of the political bodies. When asked about this, former General Secretary Zhao Ziyang replied, "It was the hope of us all that some female comrades would join the Political Bureau, but none were elected. However, this doesn't mean we have adjusted our policies on women" (Beijing Review 1988a:27). Still, women's representation in the CC has continuously decreased from 7 percent in 1977 to 5.1 percent in 1987. Looking at the NPC between 1975 (the fourth) and 1988 (the seventh), the percentage of women deputies fell from 23 percent in 1975 to 20 percent in 1988. Women standing committee members also fell, from 25 percent in 1975 to 9 percent in 1983 (the sixth NPC). Though this trend was reversed in 1988 when women held 12 percent of standing committee membership, decline in the number of women in leading bodies at the county and township levels was also evident (Beijing Review 1988a:27).

On the other hand, the new industrialization policies have in some ways, created more support for women's activities outside the home. For example, economic opportunities for women have expanded especially in the urban areas. At the end of 1986, of 62 million urban women of working age (16-54), 51 million were in the labor force (Beijing Review 1987:23). The figure was cited as an important indication of women's emancipation in China as compared to the United States (54 percent), Great Britain (35.7), France (33.3), and West Germany (32.7). Urban women workers and staff

members in 1986 increased by 50 percent over 1978 and accounted for 36.6 percent of the total workforce, a 33 percent increase from 1978.

In the rural areas, there were 6 million enterprises in China in 1987, and half of their 64 million employees were women. Today, women represent a third of advanced researchers in science and technology and, in the Chinese Academy of Sciences (where there had been only one woman division member before 1982), 15 women received that honor by 1986.

In addition, with the introduction of the population management responsibility system, the number of single-child families is increasing, which offers women the possibility of reduced household chores and provides them more free time for outside activities. At the same time, there has been renewed attention to freedom of marriage and the property rights of women under the Marriage Law of 1980 and the Inheritance Law of 1986. In 1985, China opened the No. 8 Legal Counselling Office of the Dongcheng District in Beijing giving legal assistance to women and children, the first office in China to be devoted exclusively to women's rights. It was reported that today 70 percent of the divorces are initiated by women in contrast to the feudal marriage system where only men could initiate divorce. It is even argued that "An increase [in the divorce rate] as such is not inherently bad; in encouraging freedom of marriage, China includes freedom to divorce. It is vital to women's emancipation" (Beijing Review 1988b:24-25). As such, China's entry into the resource expansion stage created both adverse consequences and new opportunities for women.

Conclusion

Women's emancipation in China has been continuously constrained by ideological, historical, and developmental factors. The prospect for the future, however, is not necessarily gloomy. As China progresses toward a more industrialized society, some of these constraints are likely to be alleviated. China has already modified its ideology to adopt market socialism. The stringent ideological stance that requires women to wait for their emancipation until the country achieves a full-fledged socialist state is also likely to be modified, allowing the regime to be more tolerant of feminist goals and activities. At the same time, the basis of the historical constraints, China's patriarchal kinship structure, is also undergoing change. As Stacey (1983) points out, rural cooperatives were initially organized around natural villages where most households were related through male members: kin relationships contributed to collectivization and, in turn, patriarchy was strengthened by collectivization. Because the current contract responsibility system signals a clear departure from collective farming it could eventually weaken traditional ties

among village members. Moreover, with increasingly open competition, income inequalities are rising among families in the villages and they are gradually becoming competitors rather than parts of a collective unit. This is likely to weaken patrilineal kinship solidarity and thus the most important structural threat to women's rights. Finally, as China moves toward a more industrialized society, women themselves will benefit from increasing prosperity. As examined above, however, discrimination against women became increasingly explicit with economic reform, and the developmental constraint can be expected to continue to exercise its influence.

When China is ready to move into the next stage of development, conflict management, which is intended to accommodate the esteem and self-actualization needs of the individual, women's self-consciousness can also be expected to increase. In fact, there is already a rise in female activism in China, affected by the more relaxed political atmosphere and increasing exposure to Western feminist ideas. Honig and Hershatler (1988:chapter 9) noted the appearance of "feminist outcries," women's magazines, and autonomous grass-roots women's organizations such as women's studies groups and women's professional associations in the mid-1980s. They also witnessed the activities of the increasingly outspoken All-China Women's Federation, which advocates women's rights and speaks out against abuse of women and discrimination at work. In 1986, for the first time in China, the organization even sponsored a conference on theories in women's studies.

After the Tiananmen Square incident, enthusiasm for women's studies and public discussion of gender discrimination did not seem to disappear. In June 1990, the Sino-American Conference on Women's Issues was held in Beijing. In March 1991, the Women-Development-Media Seminar was held under the auspices of UNESCO, at which various problems of women were discussed, including women's disadvantaged position resulting from China's reforms and open-door policy (Women of China 1991:18-19). Although these developments represent an emergence of feminist consciousness, they have not developed into an organized women's movement (Honig and Hershatler 1988:325). Most Chinese women residing in rural areas have yet to achieve feminist self-consciousness. The conflict management development stage could encourage the emergence and activities of more autonomous feminist groups and induce a political, economic, and social environment more favorable to women. When these ideological, historical and developmental legacies are overcome, and when demands come directly from women themselves, the movement and campaigns for women's emancipation will be more meaningful, and their effect more salient.

Table 1

Socialist Transformation in Industry, 1949-1953

Industry
(share of gross industrial product, without handicrafts)

Year	State enterprise	State-capitalistic Enterprise			
		Total	Mixed state-private firms	Private firms with state contracts	Private Enterprise
1949	34.7	9.5	2.0	7.5	55.8
1950	45.3	17.8	2.9	14.9	36.9
1951	45.9	25.4	4.0	21.4	28.7
1952	56.0	26.9	5.0	21.9	17.1
1953	57.5	28.5	5.7	22.8	14.0

Source: Abstracted from Willy Kraus, Economic Development and Social Change in the People's Republic of China (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982), p.42.

Notes

1. See Belden 1970 and Broyelle 1977. This optimistic view was also shared by many committed feminists such as Linda Gordon, Sheila Rowbotham, Ruth Sidel and Gloria Steinem. See Gronewold 1985.
2. "Receiving the New Direction of Women's Work," Documents of the Women's Movement in the Liberated Areas of China, Shanghai, 1949, pp. 6-7, quoted in Frenier 1978:274-275.
3. The May 4th movement began as an anti-imperialist campaign protesting concessions of Chinese sovereignty to Japan made by the allies at the end of the First World War under the Versailles Treaty.
4. Xing was very critical of a bourgeois women's movement and criticized that most feminist groups did not include lower class women. See Leith 1973:51.
5. Chinese Communist Party Soviet Central Committee, "May World Report and the Women's Movement," quoted in Frenier 1978:279.
6. Cai Chang's rise to the CC was assumed to be attributed to her husband, Li Fuchuan, a life-long friend of Mao's and one of the founders of the CCP, rather than to her own work although she was an active worker in the women's movement during the Jiangxi and Yanan periods. See Maloney 1980:178.
7. For an account of Chinese political development, see Park and Park 1990.
8. Park 1984. For a comparative discussion of the paradigm and other development theories, see chapters I, II, and III.
9. Speech by Lu Dingyi, director of the propaganda section of the Central Committee, May 20, 1956.
10. For more about "reverse development," see Park 1984:85-92.
11. Salaff and Merkle 1970:188. Women of China printed such articles as "Engage in Enterprises is Like Flying Kites Under the Bed," "Women Live for the Purpose of Raising Children," and "Women Should Do More Family Duties."
12. Mao Zedong, "Talk to Leaders of the Center," July 21, 1966, in Schram 1974:253.
13. From the Guangming People's Daily, July 8, 1973, quoted in Andors 1976:25.

14. The fragile political integration stage could invite a reverse development as demonstrated in the Tiananmen Square incident.

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