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Women in New China



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WOMEN OF CHINA IN 1949

A new China was born on October 1, 1949, when the Chinese People's Republic was officially inaugurated. As Chairman Mao Tse Tung pointed out in his proclamation delivered on that historic occasion, the formation of the new people's government symbolized the fact that "the Chinese people have stood up."

This was a great event for all Chinese people, but most of all for Chinese women. During the past 5,000 years, Chinese women have shared the degradation and oppression which a feudal society imposed upon those who toiled. In addition to such injustices, Chinese women were also forced to endure the suppression which the old society meted out to the so-called "inferior sex." From birth to death they were mere slaves that could be bought and sold like commodities, beaten or even killed — slaves first of their parents and later of their husbands, to whom they were often married as children. Now, for the first time in China's long history, women have gained true social equality with men. They have stood up beside men as equal partners in creating and shaping China's new society, in which those who labour have become the rulers.

The Common Program, adopted by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference as the political cornerstone of the new government, proclaimed

that feudal and semi-colonial China is dead. At the same time, the Common Program carefully prescribed the status of women in the New Democratic China. In precise and unequivocal terms, it declared:

"The People's Republic of China shall abolish the feudal system which holds women in bondage. Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, educational and social life. Freedom of marriage for men and women shall be established."

Thus there is nothing that now holds women back in their strivings for the betterment of their conditions. Moreover, the new people's government will give thoughtful consideration to women's special problems and difficulties. The Common Program has set forth the following stipulations:

"The special interests of the juvenile and women workers shall be protected. Inspection of industries and mines shall be carried out to improve their safety devices and sanitary facilities.

" Public health and medical work shall be expanded and attention shall be paid to the protection of the health of mothers, infants and children."

The emancipated status of Chinese women is not merely a matter of a few fine-sounding legalist phrases embedded in documents, as so often the case in the old-style bourgeois republics. China's women have already assumed their new responsibilities by taking up

some of the top positions in the people's government. Soong Ching Ling (Madame Sun Yat-sen) has become one of the six vice-chairmen of the Central People's Government. Two women have been elected to the Central People's Government Council. These are Ho Hsiang Ning (Madame Liao Chung Kai), one of the early revolutionary followers of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, and Tsai Chang, who is concurrently a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Nineteen women have been appointed to other key posts in the new government such as Commission members, ministers or vice-ministers under the Government Administration Council. Among the 662 delegates to the Chinese People's PCC, which was empowered with the responsibility of creating the new government, there were 69 women.

At every level of popular government, from the national level through the provincial and district levels on down to the village level, women are taking up administrative responsibilities in ever increasing numbers. To cite one of many similar examples, there were 20 women delegates participating last July in the first session the People's Representative Congress of Shihchiachuan, a rail-center south of Peking. They constituted 12.4 per cent of all the delegates. Furthermore, of the 25 members of the Shihchiachuan Municipal Council, two are women. One of these is Yen King Feng, a model girl worker of the city's Tahsin Cotton Mill, whose life story has been presented throughout Liberated China in the popular drama entitled "Song of the Red Flag."

There are now quite a few villages, particularly in the older Liberated Areas, where the entire staff of the local government is composed of women, thus freeing the men cadres for front-line duties.

II

Chinese women did not acquire this new political position by accident, nor was it a gift bestowed upon them. Women's new status is the logical and inevitable outcome of the bitter struggles which they have engaged in for the last thirty years.

Many outstanding women leaders have emerged from the revolutionary movement to emancipate women, to attain national independence and to achieve a New Democratic society. Today the names of these women are loved and revered by the broad masses throughout the country.

Soong Ching Ling, the first Chinese woman to hold such an important post as Vice-Chairman of the Central People's Government, is not only nationally but also internationally respected. She was one of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's most valued assistants as well as a comrade in his revolutionary life. Through the years of Kuo-mintang white terror which followed Dr. Sun's death, Soong Ching Ling remained steadfast and loyal to her husband's three fundamental policies of alliance with the Communists, alliance with the Soviet Union and assistance to the peasants and workers — policies which were consistently betrayed by Chiang Kai-shek and his ruling clique. It was also Soong Ching Ling

who, with the help of international friends, sponsored the "Association for the Defence of Civil Rights" to protect the victims of Chiang Kai-shek's merciless counter-revolutionary assault upon the people's rights. She established the China Welfare Fund to care for destitute and under-privileged children, and to the present she personally supervises the many institutions supported by this Fund which are training China's new generation. Soong Ching Ling's fund raising organization has also supported eight large international Peace Hospitals, each having from three to seven branches in the surrounding area, as well as five Bethune Medical Colleges. Soong Ching Ling is not only a great patriot but also a great internationalist. Since she has always so staunchly advocated Sino-Soviet friendship and has struggled so tirelessly in the interests of world peace, it was only natural that she was elected vice-chairman of the recently formed Sino-Soviet Friendship Association.

Tsai Chang, acknowledged leader of the Chinese women's movement, is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Chairman of the All-China Federation of Democratic Women.

Tsai Chang was born in 1900 to a bankrupt small landlord family in Honan province of Central China. She could not afford to go to school until the age of eleven, when her mother accumulated some tuition for her by selling clothes and household articles. At 16, she was graduated from the Honan Normal School. Owing to her excellent scholastic records and industriousness, she was offered the job of teaching at the

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primary school which was affiliated with her alma mater. Although she was quite young at that time, she gave all her earnings for the support of her whole family.

In 1918 she joined the "New People's Society" which was organized by Mao Tse Tung and her brother Tsai Ho Sheng. The next year Mao and her brother organized a society of needy students to go to France to work their way through schools. Tsai Chang and one of her women comrades followed suit and organized a group of Honan girls to go to France. Her activities were considered very unusual in those feudal times when girls were supposed to hide themselves in their secluded chambers.

In France, she and other fellow students worked very hard to earn a living while they carried on their studies.

In 1922, she joined the Communist Youth Corps and in the following year, the Communist Party of China.

She studied for a short period in Moscow in 1925 and was called back to China to take part in revolutionary activities. From 1925-8 she led the work of women in Nanchang, Shanghai, and later continued the same line of work in the Soviet Region of Kiangsi province.

She participated in the 25,000 *li* Long March during the Red Army's evacuation from its base in Kiangsi to the mountainous region of Yen-an, in northern Shensi province. There she continued to lead the women in their work for emancipation.

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She was elected chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Chinese Women's Association in the Liberated Areas in 1946. She became a council member of the Women's International Democratic Federation in 1946. In 1948, she headed the Chinese Delegation to the Second Session of WIDF in Budapest, and was elected vice-chairman of the Federation.

She participated in the Chinese People's PCC as a delegate representing Chinese women.

Teng Ying Chao, Vice-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Democratic Women and reserve member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, has also a long record of revolutionary activities.

Born in 1903 in Nanning, Kwangsi province, she was the only daughter of a bankrupt landlord. Her father died when she was still a child. Her mother taught primary school to earn a meager living. As a child, she learned to hate social injustice and to dream of an ideal society in which there is no distinction between the rich and the poor.

She participated in the May 4th Movement (known to the foreign countries as the Chinese Renaissance) which began in 1919, when she was a student of the Hopei Normal School in Tientsin. She helped organize the Tientsin Students' Association which assumed leadership during the students' movement. There she met Chou En Lai, a fellow comrade, who later became her husband, and who is today the Premier and also the Foreign Minister of the Chinese People's Republic.

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In the few years following her graduation from the normal school in 1920, she taught schools in Peiping and Tientsin. Always a leader in the women's movement, she initiated the "Society of Progressive Women" and published the Tientsin Women's Daily, a newspaper dedicated to the welfare of women.

In 1924, she joined the Communist Youth Corps of which she was one of the early members and leaders. The next year, she became a member of the Chinese Communist Party, and headed the women's department of the Tientsin party headquarters.

She was assigned to work in Canton at the end of 1925. There she met Soong Ching Ling and Ho Hsiang Ning. She assisted Ho to organize the Kuomintang Ministry of Women. It was also in the same year that she married Chou En Lai in Canton.

From 1927 to 1932, she persisted in underground work in Shanghai, a city raging with white terror. She entered the Soviet Region in 1934 and, despite of her poor health, joined the 25,000 *li* Long March to Yen-an.

During the war against the Japanese, she devoted most of her time and energy to work for unity between the Communist Party and the Kuomintang so as to continue the war of resistance. She was a member of the Communist 7-member delegation to the Political Consultation Council representing the united front in the anti-Japanese war.

After the Japanese surrender, a Political Consultative Conference was called in Chungking to settle

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China's internal problems. Teng was a member of the Communist Delegation to that Conference.

Together with Tsai Chang, she was elected a council member of the Women's International Democratic Federation in 1946. In the recent years, she actively participated in the work of land reform. She was a delegate to the Chinese People's PCC.

Sai Meng Chi, Chinese People's PCC delegate, is another veteran revolutionist who spent most of her time in the Kuomintang-controlled areas doing underground work. She was captured in 1932 by Chiang Kai-shek's henchmen. They employed all sorts of torture to force her to betray Party secrets, even beating her so ferociously that her legs and one rib-bone were broken. They poured peppered water into her nostrils, eyes and ears. Her blood dyed the ground red, staining the hands and tools of her torturers — yet the relentless butchers could do nothing to break the revolutionary will-power of this resolute faithful Communist. And now her sufferings have been rewarded by the joy of living to see the revolution achieve basic victory. She has been appointed a member of the People's Supervisory Committee which is under the Government Administration Council.

Li Cheng, a Chinese People's PCC delegate, who represented the First Field Army of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), is head of that Army's political department. In 1926, she threw herself into work for the Great Revolution. She never left the battlefield throughout the ten years' civil war, the anti-Japanese war, and the War of People's Liberation.

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Throughout these years, she faced constant hardships and dangers. Now that the First Field Army is marching swiftly toward the vast areas of southwest China, she is still at her post helping to liberate the whole of her country.

The young woman worker Fan Hsiao Feng, a delegate to the Chinese People's PCC, is also one of the most tested and steeled women. She began to earn her own living at the age of 12. One of the first lessons she learned in her life was the hideousness of the imperialist system, for in Shanghai she worked in British-owned factories, and then in Japanese-owned factories and finally in Kuomintang factories which were as bad as those run by the imperialists. Always an oppressed and persecuted employee, she nourished an intense hatred for the imperialists and Chiang Kai-shek's gang. She became a leader of the workers in the fight against their common enemies. The enemies employed all sorts of high-handed measures to subdue workers — but none were successful. Workers like Fan Hsiao Feng only became all the more cautious and resolute in their fight. At last Shanghai was liberated. The whole body of Shanghai workers elected Fan Hsiao Feng as one of their delegates to the Chinese People's PCC.

Li Hsiu Cheng, one of the delegates to the Chinese People's PCC, who represented the peasants of the Liberated Areas, is a typical rural woman with little schooling. During the anti-Japanese war she joined the Communist Party in her native village — a remote village in Hwa County, Shantung province. During

the years of life-and-death struggle with the Japanese, she successfully led the masses in organizing resistance to the "Mopping-Up Campaign." She also mobilized her fellow-villagers to participate energetically in production work, thus rendering enormous help to the Communist Eighth Route Army, and later to the huge modernized People's Liberation Army.

She was an expert at espionage too. She used to sneak into the Japanese rear to investigate military conditions for the Eighth Route Army. In carrying out such tasks, she often had to climb high mountains at night or even during raging storms.

Li Hsiu Cheng sent her only son to join the PLA. A good son of the Chinese people, the young man fought bravely on the battlefield and sacrificed his life in the glorious struggle.

The above are only a few of the women leaders who are known to the broad masses of China. Yet behind them stand countless heroines whose names are unknown. It is the combined efforts of those hundreds of thousands of heroines that make victory possible. It is also their efforts that have brought about the present new status of women.

III

Women's support to the war in 1949 has been a significant element in the climatic victories which have brought liberation to almost the whole of China. This is in the tradition of all-out aid for the front which China's women established during the War of Re-

sistance and continued throughout the People's War of Liberation.

Take one district in north Kiangsu as an example. In support of the campaign of crossing the Yangtze River, the 300,000 women in that area made 621,514 pairs of "crossing-river" shoes and milled 10,521,210 catties of grain for the army. When their household duties occupied too much of their time, they worked for the army at night, often by moonlight.

Women have distinguished themselves in direct combat too. During the crossing of the Yangtze River, many boatwomen refused to go ashore as advised. They insisted on transporting the soldiers across the river. The whole nation has heard the story about Yeh Tah-sao (Sister-in-law Yeh). A bound-foot woman about forty years of age, Yeh Ta Sao steered a fully loaded sailing junk across the Yangtze, straight into the storm of enemy cannon shells which lashed the water on all sides of her wooden craft. Her boat was the first one to reach the opposite shore.

There is also the story of Wang Feng Ying, a young girl of seventeen, who scornfully rejected her brother's advice to remain ashore. She kept on sending shiploads of soldiers across the river despite the shells and bullets. On the third night of the Yangtze crossings, her boat was partly damaged by the enemy's fire. Wang quickly regained her hold of the helm. While the boat was brought back under control, she shouted to the soldiers: "Don't be afraid of anything. You will be safe as long as I am here."



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Tending spindles at the Tientsin Woolen Yarn Factory

Busily occupied at the production front. Women peasants throughout the Liberated Areas have been playing an active role in agricultural production so as to produce more in support of the front, and to relieve more men to fight their enemies.



She hardly finished her words when four enemy warships headed toward her boat to encircle it. She veered her ship off to the east when the attack came from the west, and to west when it came from the east. Finally she succeeded in dexterously breaking through the encirclement, and she victoriously completed her mission of landing the troops safely on the south shore.

The soldiers were so grateful to her that they reported her heroism to the higher command. Later the PLA headquarters, as a token of its appreciation, presented her with a banner on which were written these words: "Crossing-the-River Heroine Wang Feng Ying."

Sun Nai Ying, another woman sailor, rowed a vessel across the river twenty times in one night at a point where the River was six *li* wide.

It is the revolutionary heroism of countless women like these that helped to win nationwide victory for all the people.

IV

Women's contribution has been as great on the production front as on the military front. Before a city was liberated, it was the men and women workers who looked after the factories and kept them from being plundered by the Kuomintang bandits. After a city was liberated, it was again the men and women workers who quickly put these factories back to full operation. In these struggles, women workers have

been as active and brave as the men workers, at whose side they fought.

In Shanghai, the largest center of light industries in China, women textile workers comprise 75% to 80% of all the workers of the industry. Before the liberation of Shanghai in May, 1949, these workers organized themselves to protect the plants from demolition. In the No. 1 Mill of the China Textile Industries Inc., women workers led the underground factory-protecting movement. All the workers were organized into various squads to stand constant watch. They managed to prevent the Kuomintang retreating bandits from sabotaging their plant. Thus production in this factory was quickly resumed after Shanghai's liberation.

In the Liberated Areas, enthusiasm to learn higher industrial techniques is unprecedentedly high among the women workers. During the past when the factories belonged to the exploiters, they worked only for their meager existence and nothing more. But now, the women workers know that they are working for a brighter future for themselves and their children. Therefore they are anxious to study in order to improve their work.

Chi Kwei Tze, a woman turner, can serve as good illustration of woman's zeal in the mastery of technique. Chi Kwei Tze started her apprenticeship in a railway factory in the Northeast. Her tutor, believing in the old-fashioned concept that women are naturally inferior, was reluctant to teach a girl. She was very much hurt by her tutor's cold reception, but still she

would not give up studying. She rose early and retire late, spending every minute of her time by the side of the engines. When her teacher refused to instruct her, she tried to learn from diagrams and photographic illustrations. Whenever she could not figure something out herself, she softly asked other fellow workers for an explanation. Her spirit finally moved the conservative tutor, and he began to teach her seriously.

Three months later, Chi Kwei Tze had become an expert turner. Now she has become a tutor too, always doing her best to help her apprentices. Her achievements greatly raised her status at the factory. She has been elected a model worker and was present at the Manchurian labour heroes conference.

"Follow the example of Chi Kwei Tze" has now become popular expression of encouragement among the women workers.

V

A great revolution has taken place in the rural districts of China. The Basic Program of Agrarian Law, which set forth the fundamental principles of China's land reform, specified that women are entitled to the same allotment of land as men. In return for this right, the rural women have voluntarily taken up the task of producing more in support of the front. Now that victory is at hand, the rural women are working just as hard in response to the call for national economic reconstruction.

This year in North China, it is estimated that 80% or more of the women peasants are engaged in agricultural production. In some areas, women took up the job of growing cotton, a badly needed material for China's textile industry. The acreage planted, four times that of last year, covers almost 25% of all the arable land in those areas.

Women peasants, having gained their new status, are now acquiring the new concept that labour is a great honor. Now that they have attained the possibility of becoming economically independent, they are overcoming the old idea that only by marrying a man can one be clothed and fed.

VI

Along with women's new opportunities have come a number of new responsibilities.

As Chairman Mao Tse Tung pointed out, the victory of the war is but "one step in a ten-thousand-*li* march." The Chinese people are confronting the more difficult and even bigger task of national economic construction. To fulfill this task, the liberated women must take their share of the responsibilities.

Many great cities have been liberated in 1949, such as Tientsin, Peking, Nanking, Shanghai, Hankow and Canton. This has shifted the main emphasis of China's revolution from rural to urban areas. It has provided the conditions necessary for transforming China from a backward agricultural nation to a modern industrial one. In conformity with this new

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China's Liberated women workers are taking full advantage of the opportunity to learn higher technical skills. Here are two girls who now work in the Chinese-Changchung Railway Factory in Manchuria, having recently learned to operate a lathe.

The war against illiteracy. Village women can usually spare only one hour a day for classes. However, they write the new characters out on slates which they take home to memorize while they carry on their household work.



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situation, the Chinese women's movement has also shifted its main emphasis from the countryside to the cities, while still, naturally, continuing to maintain its work in the villages.

The basic task today is the organization of all urban women, including industrial workers, students and professionals, so that they can integrate their efforts better with the new task of reconstructing China's national economy.

This involves the major task of raising the cultural standard of women industrial workers. There are roughly 424,000 women industrial workers in China's leading cities. Most of them could not obtain any education whatsoever under the old society. After liberation, one of the first demands of women workers was for greater opportunities to educate themselves. The All-China Women's Federation, in conjunction with the All-China Federation of Labour, is exerting every effort to satisfy these demands by increasing the educational facilities that are geared to workers' needs.

Considerable results along these lines have already been achieved. In Dairen and Port Arthur, for instance, more than 128,000 women workers and peasants have joined the movement of "wiping out illiteracy within two years." Most of the women workers of the Dairen Textile Factory have already learned to read at the workers' night school, although formerly almost all of them were illiterate.

Then there is also the important task of ideological remoulding among urban women in order to equip them for their new role in the new society. Women from intellectual circles in particular need help in

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reforming their old concepts so that they can begin to work for the people instead of for their own limited interests.

Many women intellectuals have enrolled in the various revolutionary universities set up to provide such ideological retraining. In the North China Revolutionary People's University near Peking, 30 per cent of the present student body of 7,000 are women. Many of these students were formerly professional women who now want to learn how to serve the people's interests. By the end of the first term this year, over 60 per cent of these women students had joined either the Chinese Communist Party or the New Democratic Youth League.

Many of the women students have already graduated from short-term courses provided by these universities. They have since been appointed to posts in all parts of liberated China. Some have followed the rapidly advancing PLA to join in the work of taking over newly liberated cities and areas. Others have gone into factories to help with the mobilization and education of the workers. Still others have gone deep into the rural areas to take up all types of mass work among the peasantry, as well as to fill administrative posts.

Those women who have remained at their old professional jobs have also undergone drastic changes in their attitude toward work. They are endeavouring to improve their business capabilities and are enthusiastically studying revolutionary theory in the discussion groups that have been widely organised in all liberated institutions and enterprises.

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Children are having a swell time at a nursery for women workers in Peking. Women workers work much more efficiently when their children are well taken care of. It is the objective of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation to set up nurseries for all urban and rural mothers when facilities and personnel are available.

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Another important task confronting the women's movement is that of setting up more nurseries, health centers and sanitation stations. Mothers are able to work better when they have the assurance that their children are being well cared for. As evidence, one may cite the case of Hsu Fong Ying, a worker of the Dairen Fish Net Factory. When her children were living with her, she could only weave 30 nets a day. Now that her children have been placed in a nursery for workers' children, her daily output has increased to 80 nets, and sometimes rises to 100 nets per day.

Altogether 81 new nurseries have been established this year in Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai and Nanking since the liberation of these cities. These nurseries are now caring for 3,646 children of professional women and women workers, and they are planning to expand as soon as additional staff and facilities become available.

The All-China Democratic Women's Federation is also devoting a great deal of attention to the problem of teaching rural mothers more scientific and hygienic methods of rearing their children. This is done with the twin aims of relieving peasant mothers from unnecessary burdens of child-care, while ensuring a healthier young generation. Old-fashioned village midwives are being sent to local sanitation stations and to medical centers for retraining in modern methods of delivery. There they learn to sterilize their instruments and to take other necessary precautions to safeguard the health of women in child-birth. Midwifery schools are also being set up in the cities to train additional medical

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workers for future service in both rural and urban areas.

VII

Numerous and tremendous as their present tasks are, the Chinese women are confident that they can victoriously accomplish their mission. Their rich experiences in overcoming difficulties will serve as guidance in the future. Moreover, they have been organized under a unified, nationwide organization which will give them better leadership than they have ever had before.

In March, 1949, All China Federation of Democratic Women was formed in Peking with Tsai Chang as Chairman, and Li Teh Chuan (Madame Feng Yu Hsiang), Teng Ying Chao and Hsu Kwang Ping (wife of the late great writer Lu Hsun) as Vice-Chairmen. Its founding signified the great unity of democratic women of various geographical regions, of different professions and trades and of all social strata. It is the first time that China has such a nationwide women's organization.

This Federation has been built up on a solid foundation. It has its roots among the great mass of women in the Liberated Areas, who, for years, have been solidly organized under the leadership of the Women's Union of the Chinese Liberated Areas. At the First Session of the All-China Women Congress, held in Peking in March, 1949, at which the Federation was created, it was estimated that already 22,600,000 women have been organized into various women's organizations. With the rapid expansion of Liberated

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In defence of
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world peace. The
Peking Women's
Association pre-
sents a banner to
the Chinese-Soviet
Friendship As-
sociation.

The opening session of the All-China Women's Congress held in Peking in March, 1949. The All-China Federation of Democratic Women was created at this conference.



China, the number of organised women has expanded so rapidly that it is impossible to give an accurate estimation at the present moment.

The Federation has branches in all the provinces and leading municipalities. And the provincial organisations have under them the county branches. It is expected that units will be set up in all the villages in the future. The Federation accepts group membership only.

The All-China Federation of Democratic Women represents the interest of all the Chinese women, and it directs the women's movement throughout the entire country. "Women of New China," a semi-monthly magazine published by the Federation, plays an important role in coordinating and guiding the nationwide movement. It also serves as a medium for women to exchange their experiences.

The Federation, together with democratic women's organisations in other countries, is striving for lasting world peace and for a people's democracy. It is permeated with the spirit of internationalism. Through it, the Chinese women will learn the valuable experiences of their sisters in the Soviet Union and other people's Democracies. Through it, the Chinese women will be able to coordinate their efforts effectively with the democratic women the world over, for it is a member of the WIDF.

VIII

Chinese women have taken up a firm stand in the ranks of the forces defending world peace. They have played an important role in the overthrow of imperial-

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ism in China, thus contributing greatly to the cause of world peace. Their efforts will further consolidate the world peace camp in the great struggle against imperialism.

Early this year, Tsai Chang and Li Teh Chuan initiated the "sign your name" campaign in support of world peace. The great mass of the Chinese women responded ardently. The long list of signatures so gathered is a good display of women's determination to defend world peace.

Furthermore, now that a new China has taken its place in the world family of nations, the Chinese women will be able to work more efficiently in co-operation with their international sisters. They participated in the Second Session of WIDF held in Budapest last year. They sent delegates to this year's meeting of the Federation of World Democratic Youth. In the Chinese delegation to Congress for World Peace, there were outstanding women writers.

Now the Asian Women's Conference is to be held in Peking. This conference signifies a major step in the great struggle for peace and freedom.

Hail the success of the Asian Women's Conference!

Long live the great unity of Asian women!

Long live the great unity of democratic women all over the world!

THE GREAT STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

This article describes briefly the Chinese women's inferior status under the traditional feudal system, their bitter sufferings under the Kuomintang tyrannical rule, their heroic struggle for freedom and emancipation, and their new life in the Liberated Areas. Although rapid changes have taken place since this article was written in autumn, 1948, it still serves to throw light on the vital role of the Chinese women in the great people's struggle for liberation.

WOMEN AND WAR

China's women follow, with anxious eyes, the outcome of each battle in the civil war. They suffer most heavily from the war which Chiang Kai-shek launched on the Chinese people, but they have also the most to gain from democratic advance.

Each victory of the People's Liberation Army means not only more women freed from the brutal degradation of feudal reaction it also means the consolidation of this new, free life in the present Liberated Areas, it means that days of peace and democratic reconstruction are nearer.

When Chiang Kai-shek unleashed the all-out civil war in July 1946, he possessed, as he thought, all the means for achieving swift victory.

Four million men under arms, control of almost every city and of a population of 300 million; the surrendered military equipment of a million Japanese troops and the continuous military and financial aid of the Wall Street tycoons, aiming to colonise China by means of their Kuomintang servants: here were all the ingredients for restoring throughout China the old rule of feudalism compounded with foreign controlled capitalism and naked imperialism.

On the one side was ranged the Kuomintang Government: a corrupt dictatorship, selling China's sovereignty piecemeal in exchange for weapons with which to maintain a tottering regime as the major-domo of American imperialism in China; a regime of press-ganged soldiery, worthless money, spies and concentration camps, of starvation for the masses and wanton squandering by the few.

On the other side stood the common people of China, with their homely aspirations: to eat enough; to be well-clad; to be free from the lash, able to stand erect as citizens of a free country. On the people's side: the people's army of willing fighters, led by the brilliant strategists Mao Tse Tung and Chu Teh; carrying with it everywhere, democracy, education, release from servitude.

The Kuomintang had everything -- and nothing, for they lacked the support of the people. And the people have wrested the foreign made arms from

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Chiang Kai-shek's hands and turned them against him. By their own efforts they have produced food, created a munitions industry, textiles, everything necessary to equip their army.

Hundreds of thousands of peasants, set free by the land reform are flocking into the People's Army to protect the land which they now own, leaving their wives and neighbours to work their holdings and look after their families.

From herded slaves, the industrial workers have become masters of the main industries and are pouring out an ever swelling stream of goods for the army and the market.

The army has grown into a modern fighting force, superbly brave, enduring and flexible, which is striking heavier and heavier blows against the faint-hearted conscripts whose lack of fighting will counterbalances their modern American weapons.

Between July 1, 1947 and June 30, 1948, the People's Liberation Army knocked out 920 Kuomintang regiments, a total of nearly three million men and captured colossal quantities of military equipment.

Now the Liberated Areas occupy over 2,355,000 square kilometres and a population of more than 168 million.* Among the cities (over 600) now controlled by the People's Army, are many which were "permanently fortified" Kuomintang strongpoints.

The shattering military blows which the Kuomintang army suffered in the second year of the war and

* (These figures are accurate to June 30, 1948).

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in the past months, with the taking of such bastions as Tsinan, Chinchow and Changchun show that the military situation has been completely transformed.

From the offensive, the Kuomintang army has been checked, thrown on to the defensive and finally reduced to a position of military passivity in which the People's Army dictates the place and time of each battle and can take any city at its will, no matter how strongly held.

At the same time, the enthusiastic support of democratic Chinese organisations for the recent proposal by the Communist Party to convene a Political Consultative Conference of all democratic organisations and progressive groups for the purpose of preparing for the formation of a democratic coalition government, shows that the political dissolution of the Kuomintang rule is keeping pace with its military and economic crises.

At the same time the battle against Chiang Kai-shek in his own rear is mounting in intensity. In industry, strike follows strike, with over three million workers taking part in 1947 alone. The student movement against the Kuomintang policy in relation to Japan and against America's domination of the government has assumed massive proportions. Rice riots against the speculative hoarding of grain while the people starved, took place in 40 cities this May and June. Deep in the Kuomintang rear, over half a million peasants are engaged in armed struggle and have partially freed whole districts.

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Faced with imminent disaster, the Kuomintang leaders are intensifying their efforts to maintain its crumbling "little dynasty." They are selling to America ever larger spheres of influence in exchange for ever smaller numbers of dollars while their U.S. masters are interfering ever more blatantly in China's affairs.

By fostering the revival of Japanese imperialism they hope to form an Asiatic Anti-Communist Alliance and already the invasion of American and Japanese goods into China is ruining national industry and creating vast unemployment.

Even the much propagandised "currency reform" recently was only the exchange, at disadvantageous terms for the masses, of one piece of paper for a different piece of paper. It has already led to fiercer inflation, higher prices, tighter hoarding and worse shortages. Each day the sufferings of the people become more intense, their hold on life more insecure.

All efforts to stave off doom are useless. The people determined to be rid of the Kuomintang dictatorship and all that it stands for. The defeat of the Kuomintang and the victory of the People's Liberation Army are now equally certain.

The womenfolk of China have played a vital part in creating this situation. Without their active support it would not have been possible. Nor will it be possible to win the final victory and build a new democratic Chinese Republic without the still greater support and participation in social affairs, government and production by all China's women.

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And the women will play their part, for in setting China free they are at the same time achieving their own emancipation.

TWENTIETH CENTURY DARKNESS

The Chinese were using such inventions as printing, paper, gunpowder, among others, before civilisation had dawned in most of Europe. Yet, today, "old" China — which now means the areas which are still occupied by the Kuomintang — remains sunk in mediaeval darkness, illiteracy, squalor and poverty.

At the root of this backwardness lies the ponderous system of feudal landlordism.

Except in the Liberated Areas, where sweeping land reform has been carried through, about four-fifths of all land is owned by approximately one tenth of the rural population. The overwhelming mass of the Chinese people either possess no land at all or possess insufficient land to maintain life. They are at the mercy of feudal landlord class — who have no mercy. Life for the millions consists of endless poverty, grinding drudgery from birth to death, to maintain the landlord class in luxury and idleness. Their precarious grip on existence can be shattered by a single bad harvest.

One bad crop normally means that millions die in sight of granaries which are bursting with the produce of their own toil.

Industrially, the development of China was distorted and held back by foreign capital which penetrat-

ed into the country at the point of foreign bayonets. For a century China has been a Tom Tiddlers' ground for any nation with a superior army and navy, and in the joint exploitation of China's millions they found the feudal ruling class to be willing lackeys.

From this traitorous combination was generated the moribund compound of feudalism, a corrupt capitalist bureaucracy and colonialism, which the Kuomintang is trying to preserve on behalf of the ruling classes of China and the imperialists of America.

To be born, in the Kuomintang areas, into a peasant or working class family means to be born to a life of indescribable poverty and misery. But to be born a girl, in these circumstances is a calamity.

A girl child is burden on a family already overburdened beyond relief or hope. This is the basic cause of the infanticide of girls, which still occurs in Kuomintang China.

Driven by poverty, parents have to sell their daughters and sometimes their sons to the landlords. Or, in a bad year, when the land rent falls due and cannot be paid, the landlord will demand a girl-child in settlement. In a landlord family, several slave girls may be found ranging from the ages of six to fifteen years.

These girls have no rights of any sort. They are beaten and misused and, if one dies under the inhuman treatment of a sadistic master or mistress, nothing will be done for the courts are staffed by landlords or their sons.

These girl-slaves are frequently sold later as concubines or to brothel-keepers, usually at a good profit to the master.

Feudal custom requires that a heavy dowery shall go with the daughter, on marriage. This means saddling the family with debt for years.

Child betrothal is a common practice. Girls of six to twelve years are sent to the home of a richer family and are considered betrothed to one of the sons. They become virtual slaves to the family.

The most fortunate women are those who marry in the "normal" way — an arranged marriage with a man they have probably never seen before. He now becomes her master and she goes to live with his family to work and bear him male children. In the West, the nagging mother-in-law is the subject of jokes. In feudal China she is always there, a jealous, malicious demon, rendering the conditions of the wife a living hell.

Among the well-to-do, polygamy is common and the poorer women may be purchased as playthings or to bear male children if the married wife is sterile or only produces girls.

Remarriage by widows is regarded as the most heinous crime. In extreme cases, girls in their teens, betrothed when children to men who have since died, are made to marry the memorial tablets of their dead fiances. They are widows when married and widows they must remain all their lives. Divorce of a man by a woman is unheard of and for a woman to be divorced by her husband is the ultimate, irrevocable shame.

Women have no property rights; no right to go and find work; illiteracy and mental obscurity are regarded as virtues. The lack of hygienic knowledge is staggering and the only "medical" attention available are the witch doctors — expert butchers of women — and midwives under whose filthy hands gangrene runs riot through the newly-born and their luckless mothers.

In some newly-liberated areas where checks were made, about 50 per cent of women were found to be suffering from gynaecological disorders. In one case, not a single one of a woman's sixteen children lived above the age of three.

In the towns still held by the Kuomintang the impact of foreign capital is felt in all its force. Foreign goods, chiefly American, drive home-produced commodities off the shop-keepers' shelves, causing factories to close down and workers to be driven into unemployment.

Runaway inflation has deprived the working class families of any security. Even if there is work, housewives have to try to keep the family alive on an income that is depreciating hourly and in face of shortages, hoarding and the black market.

Many women, daughters and wives have to go to work to share the burden of supporting the families. Women are the cheapest and most viciously exploited labour power, toiling as long as fifteen hours a day for about two-thirds the wage of an unskilled worker — and in Shanghai a skilled worker's wage is not enough to keep him fed and clothed. The conditions of

girl children, in the textile trades, especially, transcends the worst horrors of European capitalism in the last century.

In most factories in the Kuomintang-occupied areas, women are dismissed at the first sign of pregnancy. Desperately they contrive, by every possible means, to hide the signs of the coming baby and if they succeed, find some excuse for a few days leave to bear the child and rush back to work, mostly standing all day. Few such women escape gynaecological disease.

Any attempts to ease their working conditions are opposed by the full force of the Kuomintang police state. Trade unions are illegal and the factories riddled with spies and secret agents.

Employers have the right to punish workers by locking them in cells, or even in cages in which they can neither sit, stand nor lie down. That is for slight "misdemeanours." Any worker, man or women, who becomes a "nuisance," that is, who takes any leading part in trying to get a few extra dollars' wage or better conditions can be removed as a "Communist." Few such people are ever seen again. They mostly die under torture or find their way to one of the Kuomintang's many concentration camps where they are "re-educated" among all the horrors of Buchenwald. The struggle for a living wage is indeed a matter of life and death.

In such an atmosphere, the fate of any girl who resists the advances of an employer or secret agent can easily be imagined.

Encouraged by the sycophantic attitude of the Kuomintang government and the contempt in which women continue to be held in the Kuomintang areas, American soldiers also regard it as their right, under the Marshall Plan, to rape any Chinese woman if they find the opportunity. One Peiping University student, Miss Shen Tsung was raped by two GI's on the main street. Recently during a dancing party in Hankow, personnel of the American Air Force turned out the lights and raped the forty women present. The Kuomintang government merely covered up the scandal. No one was arrested.

The Kuomintang pays lip-service to the need for stopping such practises as slavery, concubinage, infanticide and other horrible practises, but its every action is an encouragement for their continuance. Women in these unhappy areas have come to realize that in the defeat of the Kuomintang by the People's Army lies their only hope of escape from their inhuman conditions of bondage.

WOMEN IN THE LIBERATED AREAS

The Dawn of Freedom

In the vast Liberated Areas, Chinese women have freedom for the first time. Their complete social equality with men is absolutely guaranteed by law.

But it does not follow from this that ingrained habits of fifty centuries of feudal backwardness can be wiped out in five minutes by a law. But the economic, political and legal basis of the enslavement

of women has been destroyed. What remains is to help and lead the women themselves to complete their own emancipation.

The women's organisations which developed in the war zones, behind the enemy lines, during the anti-Japanese war and latterly the Women's Union of the Chinese Liberated Areas, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, have brought to millions of women a consciousness of the decisive part which they have to play in emancipating society and themselves.

The Women's Union is now the leading women's organisation in the country, uniting 20,000,000 women in its own ranks and exercising an influence on many more millions. Under the general leadership of the Communist Party and the democratic government, the Union leads the women in the struggle for their emancipation. It combines this with the practical task of leading the women to give every support to the war of liberation by mobilizing them to take part in production drives; to pursue side-occupations in their spare time, such as spinning and stitching shoe-soles; to take a leading part in the land reform movement and in agricultural production. In this way the women widen their knowledge and augment the family income. The greater independence, which springs from their enhanced economic position brings about a new consciousness of their position in society.

Once this is achieved it is but a short step to learning to read and write, taking part in social and administrative work, studying politics, hygiene and sanitation.

Thus by easy and rapid stages, the women bring themselves forward to take their true place in society.

Brilliant achievements have already been recorded by the union in helping vast masses of Chinese women to free themselves from feudal darkness and oppression, to help in creating a prosperous economy and to play a conscious and essential part in the liberation of the whole country.

Women as Landowners

To China's peasant millions, land is life. The Basic Programme on the Chinese Agrarian Law, promulgated by the Communist Party in October 1947, stipulated that land in rural areas must be equally distributed to the peasants irrespective of sex or age. For the peasants as a whole, this meant the end of feudal oppression. For the women it meant, in addition, the ending of their dual enslavement as peasants and as women.

The Women's Union encouraged and led the women to take a leading part in the movement to redistribute the land and farming properties in the country-side, to participate in all the meetings and practical tasks associated with the land reform.

By last June, over 80 million peasants had received land and additional land amounting in all to some 40 million acres and millions of women had played some part in achieving this gigantic agrarian revolution,

When confronted with some wealthy tyrant at whose hands they had suffered, their shyness vanished and they spoke at meetings as readily as the men.

Everywhere there was hot discussion on a variety of questions affecting women: should engaged girls have their land at their father's or their future husband's place? what should a girl do with her land on marriage? how should land be distributed to widows? should women have separate title deeds from their husbands? and so on. Argument raged from family to meeting and back again. A father would choose one plot of land while his wife and daughter preferred another. This had to be amicably settled.

At one meeting of the Peasant's Union in a village, to which the Women's Union was not invited, it was decided that girls below eighteen should not have a share of land. The women drew attention to the Basic Programme and demanded a fresh discussion. The decision was revoked.

In areas near the fronts, the women often carry out the entire land reform; while the men support the front, and they do not hesitate to take up rifles or spears to prevent sabotage by armed gangs inspired by the landlords.

The land reform and the surging popular movement which it called forth has utterly shattered feudalism in the Liberated Areas and the achievements of women in this movement have transformed their domestic and social status. Victims of child marriage, most bitterly oppressed of all in old society, receive their share of land. Not a few of them take their land and their freedom and return to their own families. Those who remain have their own land and with it their independence. Now it is rare to hear

anyone belittling women. Many bad old habits still cling, especially among the older generations, but giant strides have been made.

Encouraged by their women, peasants flock into the People's Liberation Army to defend their newly-won freedom and the women have to shoulder much of the work.

Soldiers leave for the front with the confident knowledge that, through the Peasant Union and the Women's Union, their wives and families will be looked after just as well as though they were there. This is one of the reasons for the superb morale of the People's Army fighters.

Between 50 and 70 percent of women now take part in agricultural work so that agricultural production, instead of declining, exceeds all previous records. They raise livestock, rear silk-worms, weave mats, spin and weave cloth and earn extra money in a variety of spare time occupations.

In the Tai-hang Area a movement was launched to spin and weave 5 million kilogrammes of cloth in 100 days for the army and the people in preparation for General Liu Po-chen's offensive to force the Yellow River. Over 700,000 women, about 74 percent of the female population of the area plunged into the task with immense enthusiasm. Under the most difficult technical conditions, using only hand and pedal machines, the target was surpassed by a wide margin.

Women in Industry

Swift as the advances of women have been in the countryside, their progress in the liberated towns is

even faster. In contrast to the Kuomintang-occupied areas, where the industrial workers are treated worse than draught animals, the workers of the Liberated Areas are the leading class in society. On them falls the responsibility of directing and administering the decisive state-controlled industries and of raising China to the level of a first-class industrial power. This means intensive self-training, self-education, the solving of all the complex problems of modern industry. Most industries in the past have been wrecked, often several times, by the Japanese and the Kuomintang, and there is an acute shortage of technical and administrative personnel.

Conditions of women in industry were systematised for all the Liberated areas at the Sixth All China Labour Congress in August this year. A sign of the new place of women in industry was the fact that 32 of the delegates were women, some of them elected by organisations in which the majority of workers are men, and one of whom travelled over 3,300 miles through liberated territory to attend the congress.

The following basic conditions were stipulated for women industrial workers:

1. Equal pay for equal work with men.
2. The minimum wage, for an unskilled worker, male or female, must be adequate to maintain two persons. Above this, payment is based on skill, responsibility or output depending on the character of work.
3. Rigid restrictions were placed on overtime working, the employment of women in un-

suitable trades or on night work. The normal hours of labour to be a basic 8 hours rising to 10 in certain trades.

4. Pregnant women must be given leave with full pay for 45 days at the time of confinement, and shorter leave with pay if a miscarriage occurs.
5. The trade unions and the government or employers, depending on whether the plant is publicly or privately owned, are jointly responsible for terms of employment, safety, welfare, insurance, pensions, etc. (These vary at present according to the possibilities in the various Liberated Areas).
6. Adult education, both general and technical, is primarily the responsibility of the trade unions in the case of adult workers. Factories must supply facilities such as classrooms, blackboards, lighting etc., etc.

In general, the living standards of the workers in the Liberated Areas are lower than those of employed workers in the more industrialised countries. but they now have security and the tendency of real wages is upward. By comparison with the past and with the situation that persists in the Kuomintang areas their conditions represent real prosperity.

Enhanced wages and working conditions, the new social status of all industrial workers, the steady elimination of illiteracy and the growth of political consciousness have all combined to draw great numbers of women into industry and to take leading positions

in the factory administrations. Enthusiasm for labour and for mastering technique has swept through the working class, stimulating and being further stimulated by the mass movements to win merit as "model workers" and "labour heroes." New heroines of labour are constantly emerging. In the Antung Rubber Shoe Works, where 500 of the 900 workers are women, a three months' target to make 400,000 pairs of shoes was completed in two and a half months, Ho Su Ching, leader of the women's section was largely responsible for this both by her example of intensive work and by her technical creativeness. Apart from overfulfilling the plan her improvements in technique, led to the saving of nine drums of petrol and 3,500 kilogrammes of rubber cloth in this period.

Labour heroine Li Feng Lian, a delegate from Yen-an to the Sixth All China Labour Congress told how her uniform factory evacuated Yen-an last year taking their 50 sewing machines with them on mules, handcarts and on their backs. Wherever they could, even under fire, they set up temporary "factories" in barns and under trees. By careful organisation of work and travel they actually fulfilled their target of making 40,000 uniforms during the retreat. Li Feng Lian finished her speech by telling the women: "The only way for women to win their freedom is to take part in the revolution and in production."

Many women workers now participate in factory management. In the Shihchiachuang Tahsin Textile Mill, eight women hold high administrative posts. All the directors, assistant directors and department heads

of the Manchuria No. 1 and No. 2 Textile Mills are women. The directors of two chemical plants are women. Women are taking a leading place in trade union activities. Half of Harbin's 8,000 women workers are trade unionists and 361 of these hold official positions.

Women at War

China is a land of small-scale production and primitive transport. In spite of this the People's Liberation Army is waging a modern war of terrific violence, on a modern scale and over the area of a whole continent. This could not be done without the total support of the people. During a battle period, almost all the able-bodied men in the area will take part in non-combatant war services, stretcher bearing, and so on, often walking long distances to do so. While they are away, the women shoulder the man's work as well as their own.

Similarly, poor transport means that when an army hundreds of thousands strong arrives in a place, the major part of their provisions must be purchased from the local people. Preparation of food is a tremendous task.

During the battle of Laiwu, in Shantung, local women prepared 5 million kilogrammes of provisions for the front within a week. Each family undertook to make 15 kilogrammes of food ready. In Yiyuan county town women prepared over 3 million kilogrammes of rice, flour and cakes in 72 hours, without taking any sleep.

For the most part, uniforms and such equipment are made in the homes of the masses, where women and children spin and weave. The incentive is three-fold: to help their army, to win the war and to consolidate their freedom and land tenure, and to earn additional money for the family.

Field hospitals at the front get enormous help from local peasant women who provide houses, borrow furniture, help to nurse the wounded, prepare bandages and wash clothes. On occasions when swift manoeuvre prevents their evacuation, the people will disperse the wounded in their own homes, carefully protecting and nursing them till they can rejoin their units.

Young women not only encourage their husbands and fathers to join the Army, but also join in fighting corps and guerilla detachments to fight the enemy themselves.

Chang En, chairwoman of a Women's Union group near Hotze led a guerilla corps mainly composed of women when the Kuomintang temporarily occupied the area. A well-known and daring heroine in East China, Li Lan Ying has made herself so well hated by the Kuomintang that they have put a high price on her head.

Girls of 15 to 25 normally join the Women's Militia which cooperates with the men's militia in mine-laying and similar work. Eighteen year-old Chen Kuei Hsiang, leader of a women militia corps has personally killed 17 of the enemy. These young women's corps also tackle agricultural production in an organised way when the men go to the front, protecting the harvest with their arms if attacked.

Once, when the army had to cross the Wulung River at night, at a point where there was no bridge, the local women's militia started to build one. Most of them stood barefooted in the icy water far into the night, but they finished by the time the army arrived and they crossed before dawn.

Outstanding among the heroic women workers and fighters are the women medical workers and nurses. Their slogans are "high mobility" and "the greatest possible number of cures." In pursuit of these they train themselves to run, negotiate obstacles, jump streams and keep up the marching pace of the People's Army.

Li Lan Ting is only 24, but she has had 7 years of gruelling training in warfare and is the head of her medical group. In Kiangsu, she once had charge of 500 wounded during a retreat. There was a great shortage of medicine, not enough stretcher-bearers. The Kuomintang planes were strafing and the enemy were treading on their heels. Li worked like a dynamo, mobilised peasant women to carry stretchers and herself carried the first one. By skilful manœuvring she extricated the whole of 500 men. Woman doctor Chiang Nan Ping, although herself wounded in the right arm, stayed on the battlefield for two days and nights without rest, to tend the wounded.

All the myriad examples of women's heroism in the people's war for liberation can never be told. What can be said is that they constitute an indispensable strength in defeating the enemy.

Women in Government

In the Kuomintang areas of China the role of the tiny handful of women in government positions is purely decorative — aimed to deceive the public at home and abroad. Any entry by women into administrative work on a large scale would undermine the whole ramshackle, feudal structure that is being so carefully, and with such difficulty, propped up by the Kuomintang and Wall Street.

But, in the Liberated areas, the only question is that of ability. Whatever the job may be, if a woman can do it, that job is here. As a result, women are flocking into government positions.

Harbin's Chief Justice is a woman whose penetrating shrewdness and kindly justice is admired even by convicted criminals.

In the Lingyi and Shangho counties more than 800 women are in government service, of whom 260 are village heads,

Figures, which are unfortunately incomplete, covering seven Manchurian provinces show that there are more than 105 women holding the rank of county magistrate, 13 holding top provincial positions, 290 holding the rank of district heads, 3,629 of village heads and 2,484 women in various official posts. This is apart from women industrial administrators.

The picture is not an even one throughout the Liberated Areas, but the tendency can be clearly seen by the fact that in the older stabilized Liberated Areas the percentage of women in public positions is vastly

higher than in the comparatively newly-liberated areas. Women in China have not been slow in seizing their opportunities. These are but a few examples of a process which is taking place everywhere in the Liberated Areas. China's women workers have their feet firmly on the road to emancipation. They have a long way still to go, but there will be no turning back.

Education and Culture

Women in the Liberated Areas now have not only freedom but also the right to study and are encouraged to do so. New schools are opening as fast as possible and girls are enrolling in great numbers. Middle-aged and old women attend winter classes in the evenings and learn to read and write. They are usually the majority of pupils at such classes.

Manchuria, as might be expected, shows the best record in education. In ten of its provinces there are now 17,716 primary schools with 1,688,446 pupils and 125 middle schools with 59,481 pupils. The ten universities and technical colleges have an enrollment of over 10,000 students. This cannot be called an ideal situation in a population of some 40 million but when it is remembered that three years ago, under the puppet Manchukuo regime, Harbin only possessed one middle school which accepted 500 girls, the advance is startling, for it now has seven, and a quarter of all pupils are girls. Today co-education is in force in all schools and in primary schools girls constitute 40 per cent of the pupils while they form 28 per cent in middle schools. In the North China University, the Northeast Science Institute and Reconstruction University 30 per cent of students are girls.

A survey conducted as long ago as 1946 showed that in Wihsiang and Tsochuan counties in the North China Liberated Area, all grown girls could read and write and two-thirds of the middle-aged women have some degree of literacy.

Many women are doing valuable literary and artistic work and novels by several women writers have wide popularity. Drama groups abound, most big factories and every brigade of the army having its own group, of which about a third of all members are girls. In the villages, participation by women in dramatic groups is doing much to eradicate the false shyness imposed by feudal custom.

New Life for Children

The treatment of children in China's old society and today in the areas held by the Kuomintang is an indelible stain on China's history. If for no other reason, civilised society must condemn the Kuomintang to extinction for the torture of the helpless young.

The cause of infanticide, of the sale of children is poverty. For every child throttled before its eyes are opened, for every little girl sold into a life of concubinage, or the noisome routine of a seaport brothel, there are tens and hundreds of cases of near starvation and actual starvation of the young; of rickets and famine swollen bellies; every imaginable disease of persistent food deficiency; deformed bones; stunted bodies; warped and twisted frames. The scale of this vast butchery of the young can be judged by the fact that in one city — in Shanghai alone — last winter, 6,500 babies were abandoned on the streets by their

tormented mothers. How many in that one town were sold, died of starvation, went through that winter with never a full meal, will never be known; nor how many were flung into factories at the age of eight to toil for twelve or fourteen hours a day.

The cause is poverty and the cause of China's poverty is the dead hand of the semi-feudal, semi-colonial social structure that is now being steadily smashed down by the brilliant victories of the People's Army.

Now in the town and countryside of the Liberated Areas the common people are their own masters. At a stroke the root cause of all the suffering of children has been swept away. Slavery, child sales, the exploitation of child labour are illegal but more important, the economic necessity for all these crimes has gone with the uprooting of feudalism.

Every possible effort is being made to improve child-care. As a result of the increasing drive for education, mothers in the Liberated Areas are acquiring the rudiments of hygienic knowledge, child-care, sanitation, sane feeding. Medical teams are being sent into the villages and campaigns launched to develop preventive measures against epidemic disease. The witch doctor is losing his clientele. Already there is a distinct improvement in the mortality rate among infants and mothers.

Increasing prosperity among the peasants and workers means better feeding. Emphasis on the importance of study is making all parents eager to send their children to school and schools are being opened

as rapidly as possible, though all too slowly to cope with the rising demand.

Child labour in factories is prohibited though it cannot yet be entirely prevented in rural areas especially in busy seasons. A beginning has been made in setting up nurseries in factories, where working mothers may leave their babies and retire to feed them. In other cases the Women's Union have organised women to undertake the care of children for working mothers for payment and thus ensuring that children are not left alone to sob their hearts out in dark rooms all day.

These are only the beginnings. Ensuring a healthy, hygienic, well-fed, happy life for all China's children from conception to adulthood is a stupendous task which will take many years to achieve. The war itself, the blockade, the famines that a feudal land system invariably creates, floods caused by the Kuomintang's ruthless bombing of river dykes have created millions of orphans and have broken up families. It was recently estimated that in six Liberated Areas over 10 million children needed relief. These children are all in newly-liberated areas or areas which have recently been affected by the war and attendant destruction by the Kuomintang armies. There is moreover a desperate shortage of personnel trained in maternal and child welfare. But such problems, which have always existed in China, are being seriously tackled for the first time and, in the Liberated Areas, children now have a chance in life and parents have the economic means to be good parents.

The Collapse of the Marriage Market

Polygamy, concubinage, prostitution, the sale of women, marriages arranged by parents without the voluntary agreement of the two parties are all now illegal in the Liberated Areas. Land reform, giving all women their share of land, equal pay for women and men industrial workers have swept away the economic bases of these backward customs. But customs cling and especially the custom of parents selecting a daughter's husband or a son's bride. The general spread of enlightenment and the dawning of independence among the younger people, especially young women, however, is making marriage by parental selection increasingly rare. Marriage by free choice is naturally conducive to greater mutual respect by husband and wife and reduces the basis for contempt of women.

Among older people, the feudal horror at remarriage by a widow still exists, but among the younger generation it has little hold.

Women and men now have equal right in divorce. A reasonable desire by either party to annul a marriage is legal grounds for the granting of a divorce in the simple common-sense, people's courts. Freedom to divorce has released many women from marriages into which they were forced by their parents under the degrading marriage system of the past.

The Women's Union has played a great part in helping unhappily married women and in spreading the influence of marriage by free choice.

Simpler, less costly marriage ceremonies have gone side by side with the more enlightened marriage laws.

Government regulations only demand that there shall be two witnesses to a marriage and that it shall be registered with the local government, which issues certificate to each partner. Usually the bride will now ride to her wedding party in a decorated cart while her friends dance "yangko" —popular folk dance and song — to send her off. Most weddings now have this simple form.

WOMEN IN KMT-CONTROLLED AREAS

Chiang Kai-shek may not be appearing in the light of a great military strategist when fighting the men of the People's Liberation Army but he sometimes has at least temporary successes in war against unarmed women.

In the Sheng Hsin Textile Mill, Shanghai, there are 7,500 workers, of whom over 6,000 are women. Last February, driven to desperation by the mounting inflation and many-sided oppression of the Kuomintang, the workers shut the factory gates and struck work against the management, who had "squeezed" (the polite Chinese phrase for official robbery) part of their already insufficient rice ration. For three days the management "negotiated" with the workers, while outside preparations were made for the only sort of war in which the Kuomintang really excels. Then 5,000 gendarmes and secret police surrounded the factory by order of the government and management, armed with U.S. sub-machine guns, soft-nosed bullets, tear gas, armoured cars, tanks and cavalry.

Shuen Tieh Wu, then Kuomintang garrison commander, ordered the armoured cars to attack. Bare-handed the men and women workers tried to hold the gates but several were run over by the heavy, steel-plated cars. As the third gate began to give, a worker leapt into one of the factory trucks and through a hail of bullets, drove it at the armoured cars, temporarily repulsing the attack.

Pressed back into the factory buildings, the workers fought from floor to floor, the women using broken bowls, chairs and tables as weapons. By the evening the battle had reached the third floor and the Kuomintang authorities ordered an "all-out offensive." Many women workers were killed but they did not give up. One young heroine, wounded in the foot, still kept her water hose aimed at the gendarmes. She was finally caught and dragged, still fighting, down to the ground floor before she was beaten into insensibility. This brave woman was fighting for a little food for her child, born 34 days before.

Finally the workers were defeated by sheer weight of arms. All women with soiled hands were arrested and special agents, in masks, went along rows of others, arbitrarily picking out their victims. These were taken away to the Kuomintang's cells, to be tortured into confessing that they had been led into this action by "Communists" for political reasons and to betray the leaders of their underground trade unions. Whatever else in Chiang Kai-shek's China may be backward, his torture chambers are equipped with the latest modern equipment for extracting "confessions" including var-

ious types of electrical devices, used by the Gestapo. But his torturers are also well-versed in the use of the more old-fashioned methods: bone crushing, running splinters under the nails, red-hot irons, boiling water, forced filling of the victims with water till her internal organs are bursting, and the rest. But not a single worker of the Sheng Hsin Mill betrayed her fellows.

A young woman leader of a picket squad had all her finger nails ripped out but, with blood streaming from her torn finger-tips she only said: "We shall be revenged."

After this strike the Kuomintang took away all the corpses and disposed of them and blockaded all news of this massacre to the outside world.

This is an example of the bitterness of the struggles which the workers must wage for a few grains of rice. But, in spite of the terror, the tide of strikes is mounting and the women are playing a powerful part, at work and at home, in the growing opposition that is now shaking the rear of the Kuomintang armies.

The women's struggle in China has a strong tradition. In 1946, on International Women's Day, many thousands of women demonstrated throughout the Kuomintang areas to demand woman's participation in the government and the withdrawal of American troops from China. In Shanghai, 50,000 women marched on that day, led by Madame Hsu Kuang Ping, widow of the leading Chinese literary figure, Lu Shun. A Kuomintang counter-demonstration mustered 180 women.

This year the patriotic movements of the students, always a signpost of political direction in China, have reached new heights. The students in the Kuomintang areas have bitterly opposed Chiang Kai-shek's policies of selling China's independence to America and acquiescing in the rebirth of Japanese imperial power. They have faced armed police and soldiers to make their voices heard and many have died, been wounded and have gone to gaol as a result of bloody Kuomintang reprisals against the youth. Eye-witnesses tell of the outstanding courage of the girl students in these struggles.

Throughout the rural districts in the Kuomintang rear, the people are learning more and more about the free happy life in the Liberated Areas.

Hundreds of thousands of ex-Kuomintang soldiers, captured and later released by the People's Army are making their way back to their homes and telling what they have seen of the land reform, the industrial progress, the emancipation and well-to-do lives of the men and women under democratic government. People in some rural districts remember the times when the Communist-led armies set free large areas in the south and are longing for the return of those days.

As the Kuomintang regime reels under the military blows of the People's Army its economic and political crisis grows even deeper. The Kuomintang's only answer is to sell still more of China to the American imperialists and to try to grind still more wealth from the suffering millions. As a result, the opposition in the rural areas is assuming, for the Kuo-

mintang, alarming proportions. When the army press-gangs visit the countryside to lead more men away in ropes, they often find only women in the villages. The men, urged on by their women folk have disappeared into the hills, from where they harry the press-gangs and the landlords' bandit troops. In many places in the south there are large and well-organised guerrilla armies, controlling or partly controlling big tracts of countryside, with the men and women sharing alike the hazards of guerrilla war.

Men and women delegates to the Sixth All China labour Congress from the Kuomintang areas, told of the great longing among the people for the arrival of the Liberation Army and promised to make its way smooth and to protect the factories and social services to be handed over in good order to the democratic government.

There are no idle boasts. When Tsinan, the long encircled capital of Shantung Province fell to the People's Liberation Army in September, 1948, the postal service was running smoothly in four days, restoring the mail routes between the town and the surrounding liberated province. The bank workers had preserved all documents and cash intact and resumed work at once under democratic control. Within five days, a municipal government had been set up, consisting of representatives of various democratic bodies, and a daily newspaper was appearing.

Different Lives — One Aim

No sharper contrast could be found than that between the lives of the people in the two areas of China.

But the people in both areas have the same desires and aims. They want enough to eat and to wear; a place to live in; the right to stand erect and determine their own way of life; to be free of the degrading oppression of feudal serfdom and foreign capital to take their place as a free people among the nations of the world: to live in democracy and peace.

The great masses of the Chinese people recognise that these things can only be realised by the final defeat of the Kuomintang and the ending of American privileges in China, by the formation of a genuine coalition government and the founding of a new democratic Chinese republic which will take its place among the progressive nations of the world.

In this gigantic movement, China's women, especially in the Liberated Areas, are playing a proud part and in doing so are finally breaking the chains that have bound them for thousands of years.

They are destined to play a still bigger part as the Chinese democratic revolution unfolds and the complete victory of the people dawns over this vast country.

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