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Women, The Economy and the Socialist State: The Case
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University — Université

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Degree for which thesis was presented — Grade pour lequel cette thèse fut présentée

Ph.D.

Year this degree conferred — Année d'obtention de ce grade

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WOMEN, THE ECONOMY AND THE

SOCIALIST STATE:

THE CASE OF CHINA

by

© Eileen Mary Saunders, B.A., M.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

One of the more problematic concerns within recent feminist debates is the question of sex inequality in socialist societies. Essentially there has been a polarization within feminist debates between the rejection of an alignment with socialist movements and an apologist attempt to 'explain away' sex inequality in these societies. This dissertation seeks to clarify key issues within this debate by providing a theoretical framework for the examination of sex inequality and its linkage to other social processes. The available theoretical alternatives in the sociological literature are discussed in terms of their adequacy in providing such a framework. I argue that the socialist feminist approach is the more valuable model for the analysis of sex subordination because of its ability to link sex subordination to the specific historical material conditions which condition its form of appearance.

In order to demonstrate the efficacy of this theoretical model, three key relationships in sex subordination in capitalist societies are identified and discussed: the relationship between the use and distribution of female labour power and the economic priorities of the state; the relationship between the distribution of female productive labour and the mode of economic organization; and

the relationship between the distribution and organization of female social labour and the organization of female domestic labour. I argue that the available research demonstrates a strategic efficiency in the reproduction of sex inequality in capitalist societies.

The above three relationships are then investigated in the context of a socialist society, using the People's Republic of China during the period of 1949-1962 as the case study. Through the analysis of existing secondary data pools, policy statements and historical accounts the linkages between material conditions, state priorities and female status are investigated. It is demonstrated that sex subordination was reproduced in China in varying forms, and it is argued that this reproduction had a impact in resolving particular economic crises during the specific periods in question.

The contribution of this dissertation lies in its argument that the relationship of feminism to socialism can only be understood in the context of a tension between the emancipatory requisites of women and the political and economic priorities of the state. It thus calls for a rethinking of both the socialist theory through which we understand sex inequality, and of the socialist praxis through which we attempt to alleviate it.

The undersigned hereby recommend to the Faculty of
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Projects such as these are often solitary endeavours. I therefore feel fortunate in having been able to share my 'tribulations' and 'triumphs' with others who have contributed their support in a variety of ways.

I would first like to thank my advisor Dennis Forcese and my dissertation Committee - Jared Keil, Dennis Olsen and Stephen Richer - for their intellectual guidance and moral encouragement throughout the various stages of this project. Their enthusiasm for the range of ideas and issues discussed in this dissertation is particularly gratifying from an 'all-male' committee! Thanks are also due to Professor R. Bedeski who made helpful comments on an earlier draft of the dissertation.

I am indebted as well to Julie Bycraft and Connie Laplante for typing the various draft versions, and to Karen Spencer for preparing the final manuscript with such care and efficiency. I am also grateful to Naomi Griffiths, Dean of Arts, for providing financial assistance for typing and reproduction costs.

My thanks also go to my family for providing an environment in which independent, critical thought is both encouraged and stimulated. I feel fortunate in being part of a family where respect

for one another's work coexists with thoughtful and constructive criticism. A special thank you is due to Richard Saunders for his help in the final stages of proofreading the dissertation.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to Emma Saunders-Hastings and to Ross Hastings. Emma provided the motivation to complete this project; may she grow up in a world where the questions addressed within it become unnecessary. Ross, as always, provided his sociological guidance, which I trust without question and his emotional support, which I rely upon so often. His own humanism and belief in feminist ideals have been my constant touchstone throughout the evolution of this dissertation.

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Note on Romanization

With a few exceptions, I have used the Hanyu Pinyin system of romanization in the dissertation. Exceptions occur where Wades-Giles romanization appears in the original source, or where a particular Chinese name is most commonly recognized in Wades-Giles form (e.g. Chiang Kai-shek).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the theoretical and organizational debates which emerged within feminist movements of the past decade, one of the more divisive issues has been the 'promise of socialism'. These debates have generally revolved around the question of whether socialism 'offers' a strategic map for guiding the transition to sexual equality. The responses by feminists have varied. Certainly the majority response, particularly in North America, has been to reject the alignment of feminism with socialism, citing research demonstrating the persistence of sexual inequality in various state socialist systems. This argument has prompted other feminists to deny that women in socialism are unequal, and to argue that bourgeois propaganda, liberal distortions, and North American ethnocentrism are the sources of such conclusions (see Milton, 1973, for example, in responding to Salaff and Merkle's (1970) critical analysis of China). The thrust of this argument is that the 'success' of socialism regarding sexual equality can only be measured through a comparison of the present status of women with their presocialist status in the particular system under examination.

Another type of response to the debate is to argue sex inequality does persist in contemporary socialist societies, but only as a temporary aberration. There are those, for example, who argue that sex inequalities which persist are a consequence of technological underdevelopment and will only disappear with a

sufficient stage of development in the forces of production (see Randall, 1974 in reference to Cuba). A related argument defines the problem as one of cultural lag; 'feudal' attitudes require a long period to disappear (see Scott, 1974 for this argument in the Soviet context). The unifying theme underlying this category of feminist response is an attempt to 'explain away' the reproduction of sexism in socialism, the end result being a return to a precarious "after-the-revolution-trust" (Weinbaum, 1978:8).

In light of a growing body of historical and contemporary analyses documenting the range of sexual inequalities in various socialist systems, the basis for that "trust" seems to be eroding. Sacks (1976) demonstrates that in the Soviet Union occupational segregation and wage disparities by sex have persisted since the post-World War II period, in spite of an increasing expansion and modernization of the forces of production. Randall (1974) offers figures on Cuba to demonstrate that as of 1974, women composed only 26 percent of the total labour force and sectorally, composed 52 percent of services and 22 percent of industry. Heitlinger (1979), in an analysis of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, found that women consistently occupied low skill, low wage and 'cutback-prone' occupations. Scott (1974) found that in spite of Soviet ideology regarding the equal sharing of domestic tasks, women are fully responsible for 75 percent of such labour; a fact which, in its similarity with early Soviet sex task divisions, indicates that 'feudal attitudes' are far from disappearing. Quite the opposite; they remain noticeably persistent.

More importantly, there is now a tendency in the literature to examine the fluctuating nature of progress and retrenchment in women's issues under socialism. Rowbotham (1972) for example, traces the reversal of early Bolshevik policies in the 1929-1944 period in Soviet Russia. A new family policy emerged in 1934 strengthening the traditional nuclear unit: women's organizations were banned, coeducation was abolished, legal abortion was eliminated and divorce laws were tightened (1972:158-163). This revisionist process receded following Stalin's death, Rowbotham argues, and was replaced by a more progressive, though still limited, approach to women's issues. Her analysis and similar work such as that of Massell (1974) on Soviet Central Asia are important in demonstrating that female emancipation under socialism is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon; it is a process which has taken on different dimensions under different historical conditions. It is precisely this fluctuating process of progress and retrenchment in the role of women; and the historical conditions which precipitate it, which need to be examined. To accomplish this, it is necessary to ask three crucial questions of the socialist society under examination:

- 1) is sexual inequality reproduced in the postrevolutionary socialist system;
- 2) if so, in what form does it appear; and
- 3) why is it reproduced?

These questions delineate both theoretical and empirical fields of analysis. The measurement of whether sex inequality persists

requires a framework of assumptions regarding the constituents of sex inequality. In addition, the attempt to offer an explanation for such persistence entails a set of assumptions regarding the linkages between sex inequality and other social processes. This dissertation is an attempt to provide an analytical framework for dealing with these questions and to examine its plausibility in the case of one socialist society in particular, the People's Republic of China.

The available theoretical alternatives for 'making sense' of sexual inequality must first be examined with a view to determining their efficacy in dealing with the phenomenon. I will argue that socialist feminist theory is a more valuable model for the articulation of the linkages between the role of women and larger social processes. Moreover it serves as a useful analytical base for the investigation of those linkages in the historical development of socialism in China.

The Case of China

There are several reasons for choosing China, rather than other 'declared' socialist societies, as the case study in the investigation of the relationship of women to socialism. First there is a fair amount of literature already available on this issue in Soviet-bloc countries (see Lapidus, 1978; Heitlinger, 1979; Geiger, 1968; Brown, 1968 and Scott, 1974). While obviously the theoretical treatment in this literature varies greatly, there has generally been more information available about Soviet-bloc women and the historical

course of their changing status than has been the case for China. Certainly there had been numerous biographies, several specialized studies (for example reports on the involvement of urban women in early factory labour in China), and some descriptive pieces on the plight of women in Imperial China; but until recently there was very little available on the historical development of the female role in the transition from the prerevolutionary period through to the consolidation of the socialist period. This situation has improved in recent years with the publication of more detailed analyses evaluating women's progress in China (for example Davin, 1976; Croll, 1978; Wolfe and Witke, 1975; and Young, 1973). A significant problem, however, is the variety of 'yardsticks' used to evaluate progress. On the one hand it is a problem of North American feminists deciding the standards of what sexual equality is and is not in a context which is historically, culturally, economically, and politically dissimilar from their own. Salaff and Merkle (1970), as mentioned earlier, were severely criticized for an assessment of China which was interpreted as overly ethnocentric and ahistorical (Milton, 1973). On the other hand, an equally serious problem is the tendency of sinologists to assess the liberation of women in post-revolutionary China solely by reference to their prerevolutionary status, thus ignoring the comparative context of the transition in male roles. It is one thing to demonstrate the increased economic participation of women in China, and quite another to account for the context of their participation relative to men. Davin (1976) and Croll (1978), for example, wrote in glowing terms of the liberation

inherent in such policies as the early Marriage and Labour Laws without accounting for either the limited implementation and even retrenchment of policies in certain periods, or the differential treatment afforded women in protective restrictions regarding child custody and the types of labour they might perform.

The recent work on China by feminist scholars does indicate that there have been conflicting policies on various aspects of women's role in China in different historical periods since 1949 (see, for example, Andors, 1976; Broyelle, 1977; Curtin, 1974; and Weinbaum, 1976). There is thus evidence to indicate that retrenchment in particular policies has influenced the parameters of female roles. In most cases, however, the explanations offered for the retrenchment or fluctuation in policy remain unconvincing. Curtin (1974) argues that 'Stalinist' authoritarianism pervades the Party bureaucracy, thus sustaining a male authoritarianism. While it may be true that bureaucratic hierarchal structures impede socialist principles, this in no way explains the assumed link between state authoritarianism and the retention of segregationist attitudes toward women. Andors (1976) on the other hand, suggests that retrenchment in policies on women was a consequence of a political struggle between Maoist and Liuist factions in the late 1950's and early 60's. Again, it may be true that the most severe retrenchment occurred with Liu Shaoqui in a dominant political position; but this in no way explains the connection between Liu's economic and political policies and conservatism regarding women. It is necessary then to articulate the linkages between advancement or retrenchment in the position

of women, and the historical conditions which precipitated one or the other.

A second reason for choosing China is the fact that it is a socialist system which has, at different periods, undertaken radically different approaches to 'building socialism'. For example, whereas the Soviet Union has been fairly consistently committed to its model of urban focus, with high state industrial investment,¹ China has experimented with both a centralized, heavy industry model and a decentralized, labour intensive model. The historical presence of these 'two roads to socialism' in China allows for the investigation of the impact of differing material conditions on the reproduction of sexual inequality in China.

A related motivation for looking at China is the fact that it stands as one important example of socialist revolution in a traditional society. The 'road maps' of Marx and Lenin are not easily appropriated in societies where the industrial proletariat is either weak or absent and where capitalism is at an early stage of development. Consequently China offers a significant role model to socialist movements in other traditional societies, an important consideration with the growth of socialist movements in Third World countries. Thus the clarification of the relationship of women to the material conditions of economic development in the Chinese context can serve as an instructive illustrative case,

¹ See Heitlinger, 1979 for an excellent discussion of the impact of this policy on women in USSR and Czechoslovakia.

Finally, the selection of China was made for personal reasons. Like other twentieth century academics I have enjoyed a persistent fascination with the Chinese revolution and post-revolutionary developments. One cannot help but be struck by the tremendous changes brought about in the everyday lives of the Chinese people. While one is also dismayed or disillusioned with particular oscillations (some very recent), it remains important to recognize what China has accomplished for women. Thus, while the task here is to determine what Chinese socialism has not done for women and why, I see it as the first step in the consideration of what might be done under the 'right' conditions. I am not engaging in rejection or apology; rather I see the task as building a model of what socialism can be for women. But to do this requires first, an understanding of the components of subordination, and second, an analysis of the material conditions which precipitate its reproduction.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL ANALYSES OF SEX INEQUALITY

Introduction

A first step in the attempt to come to terms with the social reality of sex subordination is an examination of the basic theoretical tools and working procedures which have been used to "make sense" of the situation of women. In other words, we are interested in the structure of the perception of sex inequality in social science literature and the question of whether this work offers an analytical basis for the investigation of the position of women in China.

In dealing with these issues, I will attempt to assess the merits and/or inadequacies of the three dominant sociological traditions in the analysis of women's roles (functionalism, feminism and Marxism), and to clarify the theoretical contributions of an emerging synthesis.

A. The Functionalist Approach

The basic theme in functional analyses is that society is an integrated and relatively stable system composed of interdependent parts or elements. Social order exists when the different parts of a society are integrated, or in equilibrium. However, because these parts are interdependent a change in any one will have consequences for the system as a whole. Social change, in this context, becomes

the adaptive adjustment process whereby the equilibrium of the system is reconstituted. The major concern of the functionalists is thus to discover the function or contribution which each social element makes to the needs of the system, to social integration and to societal equilibrium.

Functionalist analysis begins with the assumption that both the origin and the persistence of differential sex roles can be explained by reference to the contribution these differences make to the maintenance of social stability. In other words, functionalists attempt to explain sex role patterns by reference to the invariant social needs which necessitate a particular form of sex role arrangement. This analysis of functional necessity is assumed to hold true for both pre-industrial and industrial societies, although specific features of sex role patterns may vary.

Functionalists have argued, for example, that in early hunting and gathering societies, sex role differentiation was a consequence of two basic survival requisites: reproduction and subsistence. They argued that the mobility of the female was restricted due to the lengthy period of caring for and protecting her dependent children. Because of the lack of cultural or technological alternatives (e.g. bottle-feeding; prepared foods, etc.) the female was unable to share in the major subsistence activities with males. This is particularly the case with hunting, which required long periods of absence from the community. The sexual division of tasks and labour which emerged was thus a 'complementary division of interdependent roles along sex lines, rather than a stratification or

ranking by sex. Moreover, it was a division of labour which met basic survival requisites and thus ensured the stability and persistence of the society.

A similar analysis is employed by functionalists who examine the persistence of sexual differentiation in industrial societies.

Three key assumptions are retained:

- 1) The complementarity of sex roles and positions
- 2) The functional necessity of sex role differentiation
- 3) The universality of a sex role segmented family structure.

A classic example of this type of analysis is the work of Talcott Parsons. Parsonian functionalism, while sharing the basic principles of general functionalist analysis, also served as a benchmark in the orientation of North American sociological research toward sex roles. It attempts to understand the position and role of women in industrial society in terms of their relationship to the family institution. Parsons began with an attempt to discern the relationship between the kinship structure and the occupational structure of 'modern' societies. Social status was assumed to stem from both structures; one is ascribed a status through membership in a particular family unit, and one achieves a status through differential participation in a hierarchial occupational system. The essential element in the nuclear family form is the emotional bond, between both husband and wife, and parent and child. The defining element in the occupational structure, on the other hand, is the competitive ethic between participants for the unequal rewards

attached to differentially evaluated positions. The dilemma in modern society, argued Parsons, is the possibility of destabilizing the nuclear family through the presence of a competition structure external to the family. In other words if husband and wife engage in occupational competition external to the family, the solidarity of the family structure would be threatened. The resolution of the dilemma for Parsons was the evolution of an internal structure for the nuclear family which is adapted to the functional imperatives of the occupational system. Sex role differentiation is essential to that structure, if kinship competition is to be avoided.

The internal structure, sustained by cultural norms prescribing family relationships, is based on a division between instrumental roles and expressive roles.⁴ Instrumental roles are those defined as achievement and task-oriented and relate largely to occupational behaviour outside the family. Expressive roles are those defined as emotionally-oriented and relate largely to integrative behaviour within the family. Parsons argued that women are more suitable for the latter, given their biological tie to childbirth and nursing, roles which already include expressive components. Instrumental roles are therefore best suited to males who do not have a 'pre-established' relationship to the familial role.

Parsons claimed that the effect of sex role segregation is to contribute to the stability of the family institution directly, and thus to the welfare of the entire social system indirectly. The positive aspects of this structure are highlighted by Parsons:

There are perhaps two primary functional aspects of this situation. In the first place. . . it eliminates any competition for status, especially as between husband and wife. . . . Secondly, it aids in clarity. . . by making the status of the family in the community relatively definite and unequivocal (Parsons, 1954:192).

In keeping with the overall functionalist focus on order and stability, Parsons defined nontraditional sex roles as 'dysfunctional' or threatening to the total system. It is in this context that he introduced the functional necessity of the nuclear family form. The family is more than a mere agency for reproduction in his scheme; it is the principal agency for assuring the continuation of social norms, values and patterned relationships through its role in the primary socialization of children. In addition it serves an important role as a 'cooling out' agency, an arena where tension derived in the occupational sphere may be diffused. Thus the functional significance of the nuclear family is ultimately found in its performance as an integrating agency, as an institution which reaffirms and recreates the cultural order in each succeeding generation. Its role, then, is essentially reduced to a normative one; removed entirely from the relations of production in the 'external' world of work. Family structure is defined, ultimately, as a dependent variable whose internal patterns are an adaptive response to the requisites of the social system.

This static ahistorical conception of the role of the family, and of the female's place within it, is modified only slightly in analyses of transitions in the mode of production. Modernization theory, operating under functionalist assumptions regarding the organic and evolutionary nature of society, has attempted to

correlate female status with the level of development of a society (see for example, Goode, 1963; Patai, 1967; and Eisenstadt, 1973).

Modernization analyses perceive societies as moving along a continuum of increasing complexity, measured by the degree of social differentiation and the extent and complexity of the division of labour. The internal dynamic underlying this transition is constituted in alterations in the balance of population and resources, and in external factors such as competition with other societies (see Parsons, 1966). The argument is based on the assumption that higher levels of technological resources will be accompanied by greater task specialization and consequently increased formal organizations. Moreover, modernization theorists argue that increased employment opportunities and social rewards will be made available for both men and women in such a transition. They never question, however, the existence of a sex division of labour between a public and family sphere; it is taken as a given. What they argue is that expanded opportunities within the social division of labour accompanied by institutional protection of opportunity through legislative mechanisms are factors in the modernization process which ensure increased status for women. The ascriptive basis of role assignment will gradually erode, they argue, as a society based on meritocratic principles emerges.

The break between work and family is conceptualized as a break between an economic sphere and a normative sphere. The family under modernization increasingly moves towards the Western ideal; only here it is projected as a 'natural' form for organizing

familial processes. Models of the family such as Smelser's taxonomy of family functions are more than mere descriptions of particular historical family forms; they are used precisely as universally-applicable analyses (Smelser, 1959). What this treatment of the family engenders is an analytical break between two spheres; that of the family and that of the economy. The consequence of this division is the removal of any possibility for an examination of mutual linkages between the spheres. We are left with an analysis of the family and of woman's role within it as determined and conditioned by systemic needs.

What, then, are the analytical merits of functionalism as a framework for addressing sex inequality in a theoretical or comparative context?

Functionalism argues that sex differentiation is functionally related to the needs of the system at a particular stage of evolutionary growth. The segregation of males into the social labour process and of females into the family institution in 'modernizing' societies serves a stabilizing function, while equality of opportunity mechanisms in the labour sphere serves as a protection against the possibility of structured sex inequality. There are several arguments one can raise against such a perspective.

First, the major thrust of functionalism is to analytically separate sex differentiation and sex inequality. By describing particular sex differentiated roles, and then tautologically positing the necessity of their existence, functionalists close the door on any attempt to link task differentiation to inequality. This ignores

the fact that social rewards, and the power to control those rewards, attach to differentiated positions in a critically different manner. Therefore, the use of functionalist analysis precludes the possibility of tracing the theoretical linkages between 'female' tasks and access to power.

This problem is tied to the functionalist assumption that sex role differentiation is an integrative mechanism ensuring social stability. In order to 'prove' the function of sex role differentiation, it is necessary to posit an ideology of equal opportunity and egalitarian family relationships. Functionalism does this, and thus must ignore or explain away the more visible aspects of sex inequality.

A second problem with functionalist analysis is its ahistorical approach. This is apparent at several levels. In the conceptualization of the sexually segmented nuclear family, functionalists project as universal and necessary what is essentially a Western-based familial form closely tied to the early development of capitalism. Anthropological evidence indicates that the female role in the family is not a static phenomenon; quite the opposite, it is historically and culturally variable (see for example, Mead, 1935; Boserup, 1970; Murdock, 1957 and Sanday, 1973). A similar ahistorical bias is present in functionalist descriptions of the sex division of labour. As Clark (1977) has noted, in a review of modernization literature regarding female status, the treatment of a sex division of labour ~~as a~~ constant precludes the possibility of examining historical or material factors which may influence its

form. It is for this reason that anthropologists like Sanday (1973) and Chinchilla (1977) have challenged modernization assumptions. In their research, they have demonstrated that there is no linear progression between increasing modernization or expanding industrialization and elevated female status. Rather, they have suggested that a variety of components are integral to increasing the social status of women. I will return to a discussion of these factors later in the discussion of theoretical approaches. The importance of their work at this point is to suggest that modernization cannot be treated as a universal process of noncontradictory social change wherein the status of women increasingly improves. Rather, they argue, it is more useful to take a concept such as the division of labour by sex and examine the socio-political and economic factors which influence its appearance.

A third problem with functionalist analysis is the analytical separation made between a public sphere and a private sphere. This occurs on two levels. On the one hand, functionalists project a dichotomy between production and reproduction backward into the past. Such a break is unfounded given the unity between the organization of the production process and the family unit in preindustrial modes of production. On the other hand, the tenacity of this analytical dichotomy is also apparent in functionalist analyses of the 'modern' family. The general thrust is to divorce analysis of the family from analysis of the ~~mode~~ mode of production. The normative context used for discussion of the family and of status precludes analysis of economic factors, and underplays the implications of female wage labour and

domestic labour.

As Beechey notes in her critique of postwar functionalism, there is no satisfactory basis of explanation in their analyses for the change in female roles in production in modern capitalism.

The change which these empirical studies document are ascribed in twin sources: the impact of industrialization and the normative march towards democracy (Beechey, 1978: 168-169).

Functionalist explanation neglects an understanding of the uneven nature of development and transformation in industrialization, and a consideration of the factors which shape female participation in different sectors of the labour process. Moreover, there is no attempt to understand the connection of these factors to changing factors in familial relationships. For example, what is the link underlying the removal of certain tasks from the family sphere (i.e. education, health care, food production) with the increasing demand for female labour in certain sectors of production? Functionalist analysis cannot adequately deal with this question because it lacks a theoretical base for explaining the interconnections between the two spheres. Its major impact has been to direct the focus of sociological research on women to the relationship of women to the family and to ignore the economic roles of women. Its efficacy as a theoretical framework for the examination of sex inequality is thus limited by its inability to provide an analysis which can shed light on the various aspects of women's roles in a comparative historical context. Modernization is not a monolith, neither is family structure. The failure of functionalism to emphasize this fact is its fatal flaw.

B. The Feminist Framework

Feminism, as an analytical framework within social science literature, emerged as a counterpoint to the conservatism of functionalism and of early psychobiological arguments. While there is disagreement among feminist analysts on the form of intervention necessary to effect change, there is a common focus on the discrimination against women in the distribution of socially valued resources. The issue in feminism is more than sex differentiation; it is sex inequality. The explanatory thrust of feminist arguments focuses on ideological factors in the culture of a society, factors which serve to justify the exclusion and subordination of women.

A key concept in feminist analysis is patriarchy, a term which first received popular exposure in the work of Millet (1969). It is a term which has often been used loosely in the literature and vulgarized in the popular media. Patriarchy essentially refers to an overall sexual hierarchial ordering of society which is sustained through both the family and social relations external to the family.

Patriarchy is defined to mean a sexual system of power in which the male role is superior in possession of power and economic privilege. . . . Sex roles themselves are understood to be units of power and oppression (Eisenstein, 1977:8).

In addition, feminists argue, patriarchy is a universal feature of human history. Citing anthropological evidence of the presence of sexual exclusion and taboos in early communal societies (see for example, Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974), feminist work concludes that patriarchy is a transhistorical system of power.

Sex inequality is located, they argue, in the relationships between males and females; these relationships are defined as the manifestation of a cultural system which defines women as inferior to men. In other words, once patriarchy emerges, it is maintained and reproduced through an ideological system which justifies inequality. The original basis for the emergence of patriarchy lies in the importance of biological differences in size, strength and the relation to reproduction between the sexes in early preindustrial societies. The male's biological "advantage" allows him to take control of the important resources in society such as food, land, weapons and implements of production. More importantly though, according to feminist theory, the economic and social rewards which this control allow are maintained through the cultural definition of appropriate sex roles. Thus, the persistence of male privilege or patriarchy is ensured through the emergence of a culture which defines men as superior. As a result, while biological differences are argued to be no longer as important in a technological industrial society, the preservation of male privilege continues because of the persistence of a 'patriarchal ideology'. This is not to suggest that sex inequality is apparent only in the realm of ideas, attitudes and values. Rather, feminist theory argues that the exclusion of women from access to economic or social power can only be understood by reference to the role of ideology. They argue that ideology has replaced biology as the determinant in the reproduction of sexism.

Feminist work has focused on two areas of inquiry: the role of the family as a mechanism in transmitting patriarchal ideology,

and the role of various socioeconomic institutional practices in excluding women from equal opportunities with men (the latter has focused primarily on Western capitalist societies).

Essentially, feminists share with functionalists a normative conception of the nuclear family as a socializing agency. Where they differ is in their conception of the content and consequence of such socialization. Functionalists argue that family socialization allows for the integration of the individual into a stable, consensual culture. Feminists, on the other hand, claim that the role of family socialization is to reaffirm and justify the pattern of segregated, unequal role differentiation. It does this largely through the creation of what Millet calls a psychic structure for women which is very different from that of men. The psychic structure for women is predicated on an image of the female as passively related to her social world. De Beauvoir conceptualizes this relation as a dichotomy between male as subject of action and female as object of action (de Beauvoir, 1952). The consequences of the differential psychic structure are perceived on several levels: women develop a different temperament than men, have inferior self-images, and channel their motivational aspirations towards different role behaviour. Essentially the argument is a restatement of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" notion which is so popular in socialization research. In other words, if a culture defines men and women differently, and organizes its socialization practices on that assumption, then the consequence is the objective difference in the status of men and women. But the primary level of explanation is the

realm of cultural attitudes and expectations which both sexes are socialized into accepting. Because the institution of the family is the first and most important source of cultural ideas, its role in transmitting and reproducing patriarchy is crucial.

As indicated earlier, another body of feminist research focuses on institutional practices which reinforce a patriarchal system. Again these practices are assumed to be manifestations of cultural beliefs about women. The research in this area has covered a range of topics from education (Pyke, 1975), to religion (Reuther, 1974), to mass media (Tuchman et al., 1978). The unity of this approach lies in the attempt to demonstrate how the consistent ideology of women as being different from men in temperament, skill and attitude is translated into practices which exclude women from access to institutional positions. For example, Reuther (1974) has argued that the ideological association of the male image with divinity figures in various religions has supported the official exclusion of women from participation in certain levels of the religious hierarchies. Therefore, the fact of male control of theological decision-making is maintained through ideological support which defines theology as a male preserve.

The feminist consensus regarding a definition of the problem is unfortunately not reflected in their attempts to offer a solution. The feminist framework is polarized at the level of intervention strategy between views which can be loosely called liberal feminism and radical feminism.

Liberal feminism is more closely tied to Western capitalist societies. It is predicated on the assumption that the capitalist social system is "reformable"; that patriarchy can be eliminated within the parameters of society as it now exists. This approach retains a classic conception of liberal democracy as a meritocracy, a system providing equal opportunity to achieve unequal rewards. In this view, the problem is to 'restore' the meritocracy so that women can compete equally with men. Given equal opportunity, all individuals can rise or fall to their own level of merit, rather than have their mobility predetermined by their gender. Thus, intervention for liberal feminists is directed largely toward the capitalist occupational sphere and involves the removal of cultural attitudes about gender which impede equal opportunity. In positing equal opportunity as their goal, they focus their attack on both the socialization process which transmits patriarchal beliefs and the legislative process which permits particular discriminatory institutional practices. Liberal feminism, then, does not question the premise of hierarchial positions and rewards in society; what it questions is the distribution of those positions and rewards on the basis of gender.

Radical feminism shares with liberal feminism a belief that effective change must involve an alteration in cultural ideology. However, they disagree on the nature of intervention. Radical feminism does not place particular emphasis on the occupational discrimination against women in capitalism; the latter is dealt with as merely one manifestation of a deeper problem. In radical feminist

strategy, the psychic structure formed in family socialization is defined as the key target of attack. Consequently, the family institution is defined as the major agent in the reproduction of inequality. The implication for strategy then involves an attempt to restructure the family institution in order to strip it of its patriarchal form. There are some radical feminists who suggest this be accomplished on an individual basis, primarily using the technique of 'consciousness-raising'. The latter is conceived of as a process whereby individual women, through dialogue with others, come to see the patriarchal form and roots of their own 'psychic structures' and come to translate that new-found awareness into attempts to regain control over their own development. It is essentially an individual, voluntaristic model for change (this is largely the thrust of Millet's model).

There are other radical feminists, however, who question the very existence of heterosexual marriage and the family institution (for example Firestone, 1970 and Koedt, 1972). They argue that contemporary forms of the family are premised on a dependency relationship between the male and the female, a dependency which is personified even at the level of sexuality: hence, they believe the elimination of sex inequality requires the abolition of monogamous marriage and the nuclear family. Once the family institution is destroyed, patriarchy as a power system will collapse.

In summary, feminism is a framework which assumes the universality of patriarchy and attempts to explain its maintenance and reproduction by reference to ideological factors. There are

several problems inherent in this approach, both at the level of explanation and of intervention. First, there is a tendency toward biological determinism in the explanation of the origin of patriarchy. It is assumed that biological differences universally hindered the female in her access to participation in, or control over, production in early societies. However, anthropological studies indicate that the productive contribution of women in many hunting and gathering societies equaled and often surpassed that of men (see for example, Martin and Voorhies, 1975).

A second, and more serious problem, is the characterization of patriarchy as a universal system of power! On the one hand this analysis fails to specify how patriarchy changes in form from one historical period to another; sexism in feudal societies cannot be simply equated with sexism in modern capitalist societies (Mitchell, 1971). Thus, to treat patriarchy as an ahistorical, autonomous system of male power ignores its specific features in particular periods. On the other hand, the feminist conception of patriarchy as a system of male power over females ignores the differential relationship particular groups of men and women have to patriarchy. In other words, not all men benefit equally from patriarchy as feminist theory would suggest; often, a particular class of men benefits more than others (e.g., male employers of cheap female workers). In the same vein, not all women suffer equally under patriarchy. Particular groups of women may have more access to status and reward than others (e.g., middle and upper class women). To simply portray the contradiction as lying between men as a group

and women as a group is to mask the actual contradictions in status which exist within each sex group. This 'glossing' of the problem is reflected in particular strategies for intervention. For example, legislation directed at equal opportunity to compete in capitalist societies ignores the fact that different strata of women, depending on their class background, bring different resources to the labour market. In addition, consciousness-raising may be more of a middle class luxury. For many women, it is the lack of basic life necessities which is their most immediate concern.

A third, and a related problem is the emphasis placed on ideology by feminist analysis. To argue that patriarchal ideas create particular structural conditions for women ignores the possibility that patriarchal ideas may emerge as a consequence of and support to particular material conditions. For example, the belief that women are not as 'valuable' workers as men in the labour market may be the result of the necessity to maintain a relatively cheap labour pool.

Finally, feminism fails to analyze the specific links between the female role in the family and the female role in the labour market. They are treated as two separate dimensions of inquiry, other than to suggest that patriarchal ideology shapes female status in each sphere. It is necessary to inquire whether the structure of the family institution at a given point in history is related to the structure of the productive mode. In this way one could investigate whether female entrance into the labour sphere is shaped by factors in her familial position. The failure to tie together these two

spheres of female participation analytically is reflected in the polarization of feminist theory strategically. On the one hand there are liberal feminists fighting for reform of capitalist institutions on a piecemeal basis through legislative lobbying, educational content regulation, rights within unions, political representation and other such changes. On the other hand there are radical feminists focusing on equality in the family through improved birth control rights, contractual marriage, or ultimately abolition of marriage. The major problem here is the failure to analyze and deal with the interdependence between these various manifestations of sex inequality.

C. The Marxist Tradition

The Marxist literature is important to this study in two senses: it stands as an important contribution to the analysis of sex inequality, and it furnishes a map of socialist strategy for resolving the "woman's question."¹ It is necessary to examine both the classical Marxist position, and the more contemporary Marxist arguments, to appreciate the theoretical continuity within this literature.

1. Classical Marxism

There is little sustained analysis of issues specific to

¹ The Maoist application of the Marxist 'map' will be addressed later in the discussion. It will be demonstrated that CCP analyses regarding women reflected the classical Marxist argument outlined here.

women in classical Marxism. Rather, the tendency is to treat the question of women as part of a more general critique of class relations in capitalism. Nevertheless, general arguments on women's oppression and the family institution exist in scattered form in The Communist Manifesto, The German Ideology and Volume I of Capital.

Marx's argument is that the position of women is reflective of class relations emerging within a capitalist mode of production. These relations exploit women as workers in the labour force and oppress women as forms of property in the family institution. Their exploitation, according Marx, has no specific features outside of the general mechanisms which exploit all workers, and their oppression in the family is determined by factors in capitalist society which are external to the family institution. As a result, the female becomes, in most Marxist analysis, just one more victim of capitalism, and the structural conditions which underlie her 'victimization' are seen as identical to those which underlie exploitation in general.

The Marxist position on the place of women in class relations cannot be understood apart from Frederick Engels' analysis of the historically specific emergence of women as a subordinate group. Engels' argument, which is actually an elaboration of earlier statements from The German Ideology, was first presented in 1884 in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. His position is essentially that the original subordination of women is historically coincident with the emergence of private property in agricultural and herding societies (allowed for in the transition from a subsistence to surplus form of society). The monogamous

family and the isolation of women for sexual exclusivity evolved as means to ensure the transmission of property to 'legitimate' heirs. In this context, patriarchy came to be defined as a relationship reflecting a property relation between husband and wife in the context of the family.

The important point in Engels' analysis is his claim that earlier forms of society--such as hunting and gathering bands--were sexually egalitarian and that it was only the emergence of private property which led to a subsequent subordination of the female role. The existence of a sexual division of labour or specialization in tasks in early societies was never questioned by Engels. Instead, he argued that while men and women performed different types of subsistence labour, the absence of production-for-exchange precluded an unequal relationship between them. The crucial step, for Engels, was the development of resources for production which allowed production-for-exchange in addition to production-for-use. Male tasks tended to be located in the sphere where production resources expanded, for example in the irrigation of land: hence, their labour became part of production-for-exchange. Female tasks on the other hand tended to be located in the sphere where production resources were stabilized, for example in the preparation of food for consumption; hence their labour remained part of production-for-use. Thus, Engels was attempting to describe the emergence of a break between two types of labour spheres, and the segregation of the sexes to different spheres. Moreover, he claimed that this break created the condition necessary for the subordinate role of women: their

exclusion from participation in 'valued' production.

In the industrial transition to early factory capitalism, this break was retained and solidified as a break between a public sphere of production and a private sphere of the family. Because the production process was removed entirely from the household focus, the family (and any labour performed within its boundaries) became a secondary institution which merely reflected the economic relations of production. The family is now seen as epiphenomenal; its form is a reflection of the material conditions of capitalism. It plays one essential role for capitalism, by being the institution for the appropriation and transmission of private property. The female role in that family structure is viewed as a consequence of her lack of access to participation in public production, and her consequent lack of control over property.

The primacy of the sphere of production in Marxist analysis is accompanied by an analytical subordination of the private sphere. In The German Ideology, Marx and Engels make specific mention of the historical subordination of the family relation.

The family which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one. . . . (Marx and Engels. 1947:17)

With this assumption, the role of reproduction in the family (of both labourers and labour power) becomes peripheral to the relations of production. Indeed, it involves a perception that "If production be capitalist in form, so, too will be reproduction" (Marx, 1967:566).

Thus, the issue of the oppression of women through their special role in the relations of reproduction is, for Marx, a

question of their oppression under conditions set by capital. This assumption is important in informing Marx's conception of patriarchy. When Marx made reference to patriarchy,

. . . he was referring to a specific relation of domestic production, in which the head of the household owned or controlled the means of production and organized the labour of its members (McDonough and Harrison, 1978:28-29).

Patriarchy as a social relation involving the subordination of women to men has no meaning or existence in Marxist analysis apart from its base in the family institution and its linkage to property. Moreover, there is no analytical link between patriarchy and a sex division of labour; quite the opposite, the latter is treated as a 'natural' separation. In a passage from The German Ideology, Marx and Engels articulate their conception of the precapitalist family relation, wherein patriarchy is treated as analogous to slavery, and age and sex oppression remain undifferentiated.

With the division of labour, in which all these contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, is given simultaneously the distribution, and indeed the unequal distribution. . . of labour and its products, hence property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property. . . . (Marx and Engels, 1947:21).

The possibility of the historical erosion of patriarchal relations within a capitalist mode of production was later articulated in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, The Communist Manifesto, and Capital Volume 1. Essentially, the argument was that the increasing industrialization which characterized the development of capitalism led to the increased

entry of working class women (and children) into social production. Consequently their role in the family institution was altered; equal exploitation in production supposedly provoked nonoppressive relations in the family.

However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes (Marx, 1967:489-490).

Thus in classical Marxism the entry of women into social production became the first step in creating more egalitarian sex relations, a step which was possible within the parameters of capitalist relations for working class women.

Involvement in social production is not however the sole criteria of female liberation for Marxism. There is also a recognition of the 'alienating' nature of household work, particularly where the woman is also engaged in social production. In other words, the conditions and relations of work in the household have two consequences: women are 'enslaved' in the home, and they are unable to achieve full integration into social production.

Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production. . . . The modern individual family is founded upon the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife. . . . (Engels, 1972:137).

The solution suggested by Marxists is the socialization of domestic tasks as public labour. The result is a direct linkage between increasing social labour for women and decreasing

responsibility for privatized household labour. Moreover this strategy is dependent on the abolition of private property.

With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry (Engels, 1972:139).

To return to the notion of the 'map' offered by classical Marxism for achieving sex equality, it is now possible to delineate the criteria of emancipation suggested in Marxist analyses. These criteria are:

- i) the entrance of women into social production;
- ii) the socialization of domestic labour into the sphere of social production; and
- iii) the abolition of the family as an economic institution through the abolition of its *raison d'etre*--private property.

It is apparent that these strategic factors are conditioned by the overall analysis. Before turning to an examination of the analytical adequacy of the argument, it is necessary to question whether, and to what degree, classical Marxism has been modified by more contemporary Marxist approaches to sex inequality.

2. Contemporary Marxism

The primary units of analysis in contemporary Marxist debates over the position of women are the family institution and, within that sphere, domestic labour (see e.g., Seccombe, 1973 and 1980; Benston, 1969; Quick, 1977; Zaretsky, 1976; Dalla Costa and James, 1973; and Gardiner, 1975). There has been an attempt to reintroduce the sex question within Marxist analytic categories, and thereby to

correct what are perceived as historical oversights rather than errors.

Granted that Marx did not explicitly elaborate an analysis of domestic labour, but there is nothing in his work, so far as I am aware, that prevents one from doing so (Seccombe, 1973:4).

At the same time, the overall thrust of classical Marxism regarding the primacy of class analysis and class-based revolutionary strategy is retained.

. . . the statement that that contradiction between the classes is primary and that between women and men is secondary must be understood as a basic reassertion of the basic Marxist principle that all history is the history of class struggle, a principle of strategic importance in the movement for an end to all oppression, and for an end to capitalism in particular (Quick, 1977:52).

These contributions differ from the classical Marxist arguments in their attempt to articulate the particular form of family relations and the specific nature of domestic labour which appears in capitalism. As a result, while family and reproduction remain structurally subordinate to the mode of production, they are no longer analytically peripheral in contemporary debates.

There are two key questions in this literature: what is the role of the family (i.e. the private sphere) and what is the role of domestic labour in the creation of value? Both questions have been posed almost exclusively within the context of capitalism.

In addressing the first question, contemporary analysts have tended to accept Engels' argument regarding the historical separation

of household and production in early factory capitalism.² In elaborating this discussion, they have attempted to determine the changing 'functions' served by the family in tandem with changes in capitalist production. Zaretsky (1976), for example, argues that changes in industrial capitalism 'necessitated' a change in family life, whereby as prior functions were removed from the family, new ones emerged.

As capitalism developed the productive functions performed by the family were gradually socialized. . . . At the same time the family acquired new functions as the realm of personal life--as the primary institution in which the search for personal happiness, love, and fulfillment takes place (Zaretsky, 1976:65).

This conception of the family as serving an emotional function in the stabilization of personal life is echoed by M. Benston (1969) and D. Smith (1976) and underlines the lack of material links between production and the family. Moreover, the argument rests squarely on an analysis of the two spheres as separate entities, with the content of the latter being determined by the needs of the former.

The second question central to contemporary Marxist debates regarding women is more concretely located in specific Marxist categories of analysis. Specifically, they deal with the question of value-creation in domestic labour. The debate has divided into several opposing positions, and frequently has been reduced to evaluating who has read her/his Marx more carefully (see Vogel, 1973;

² It should be noted that there is less agreement regarding the evolutionary sequence Engels posits. Specifically, critiques have been made against his argument of a 'mother-right' family form preceding 'father-right' forms (see Delmar, 1976 and Gough, 1971).

Gerstein, 1973; and Smith, 1978). The central issue of contention, however, has been the question of whether domestic labour consists of productive labour; and consequently, what its relation to capitalist production entails (see Fee, 1976, for a useful summary).

There are those who argue that domestic labour is productive labour in that it produces the commodity labour power which enters into an exchange relation with capital (see Morton, 1970; Gardiner, 1975; and Blumenfeld and Mann, 1980). In other words the argument suggests that in feeding, caring, maintaining and 'bearing' family members, women reproduce labour power for capital. While it may be noncapitalist in its organization of production, domestic labour nevertheless directly and indirectly contributes to capitalist accumulation.

[domestic labour] . . . is a noncapitalist form of production for exchange. We argue that the time expended in domestic labour, like the labour time expended by any other petty producer, enters into and thus contributes to the value of a commodity--in the case of domestic labour, the commodity labour power (Blumenfeld and Mann, 1980:283).

Other analysts argue that while domestic labour performs necessary functions for capitalism, it is nevertheless unproductive in the context of directly creating surplus value (Benston, 1969; Secombe, 1973 and 1980; and Fox, 1980). Whereas Benston demonstrated 'use values' created for capitalism by domestic labour, Secombe argues that domestic labour is 'socially necessary' labour with an indirect relation to capital. The key to understanding domestic labour is its role in the reproduction of capitalism--in terms of both labour power and the relations of production (Secombe, 1973:14, 15).

Finally, a third position in this debate is that domestic labour is a form of production external to capitalist production which performs particular functions, but in no way adds to value appropriated by capital.

Domestic labour is, then, not problematic for Marx's theory of value because it is not part of its object, the production and exchange of commodities. Consequently, it does not form part of the capitalist mode of production of commodities, but is rather one of its external conditions of existence which it continually reproduces. . . (Smith, 1978:211).

This argument, which tends to a somewhat more orthodox reading of classical Marxism, leads to a reiteration of the proposition that the increased entry of women into social production is the first basis of emancipation. It is the separation of consumption and production which is the problem, not the organization of the relations of consumption.

The value of contemporary Marxist debates on domestic labour lies in their attempt to delineate the relationship between private household production and capitalist industry. When not reduced to examinations of 'doctrinal purity', the positions developed by the various contributors have at least removed the analytical blindfold from this aspect of sex subordination. In so doing there has been a consensus among the various positions that domestic labour performs services from which capitalism benefits--directly or indirectly. What is less clear in their analyses is a consideration of the nonfamilial subordination of women, or of how domestic 'oppression' is linked to public 'exploitation'. Moreover, there is no clear discussion of why it is women as a group who perform domestic labour. It is a question, in other words, of failing to address the issue of

a sex division of labour. The unity of classical and contemporary Marxist arguments concerning women lies in their mutual focus on the family relation as the structural link to the subordination of women. Patriarchy, the institutionalized expression of that subordination, continues to be defined as a property relation operating within the family sphere.

Patriarchy, for me, refers to a system of male householdship based on the domination, in the family household, of the father/husband over the mother/wife and the resident children (Seccombe, 1980:63).

As with classical Marxism, the material basis of patriarchy is the control of property and the victims are both women and children. What this engenders is a structural separation of the two spheres in capitalism and an a priori subordination of the family to production. Moreover, it leads to a reaffirmation of the basic Marxist principles concerning emancipation strategy: entrance into production, socialization of domestic tasks and abolition of the economic family unit.

Clearly the problem, as defined by Marxism, is one of separation; separation of the family from production and separation of women from productive labour. The privatization of the family sphere and domestic labour is the key to understanding sex subordination; consequently the socialization of the means of production and the abolition of the structural separation of the two spheres is necessarily the solution.

The contribution of Marxist literature, both classical and contemporary, has been to redirect analytical attention to the historical link between variability in female status and changes in

the mode of production. Moreover, it has attempted to provide a material basis to the question of sex subordination through a focus on property relations. Contemporary contributors to the debate have also attempted to redress the lack of analysis of the female role in the family. In so doing they have begun to lay the foundation for a theory of the family and of woman's role within it. It is now becoming possible to investigate how the family institution contributes to the maintenance of particular economic relationships.

The limitations of the Marxist problematic have, however, hampered theoretical attempts to fully explore the interaction of sex subordination and modes of production.

On the one hand, the problem stems from a retention of the structural subordination of the family relation (including reproduction and domestic labour). Some critics suggest that this conception of the family has led to the articulation of functionalist assumptions in Marxist debates.

In both cases of functionalism--the sociological and the materialist--the family is thought as the non-contradictory site of socially necessary activities such as 'pattern maintenance' (ideological reproduction) and 'tension management' (psychological renewal of labour power). . . . And both see the family as the transmitter or repository of social forces, the site of whose real operation lies outside itself (Kuhn, 1978:45)

In a similar vein, others have criticized those contributors to the domestic labour debate who define the emergence of domestic labour as a response to the 'functional requirements' of capitalism.

. . . without any serious historical investigation, they have argued that the current functions of domestic labour and its current social consequences were the forces that led to its initial organization (Curtis, 1980:103).

The crucial dimension in the above critiques is the recognition that Marxist analysis, as presently constituted, lends itself to an ahistorical approach wherein the family institution is conceptualized as simply a determinate consequence of productive forces.

On the other hand, theoretical limitations also stem from the Marxist conception of patriarchy. It is a notion based on property relations in the family, one which assumes that patriarchy will erode with the increased entrance of women into social production. While contemporary analysts have criticized the mechanistic approach of Engels towards labour participation in capitalism (see Seccombe, 1980:63-65), they nevertheless are unable to provide an adequate theoretical explanation for the persistence of patriarchal relations in spite of increasing participation rates for women. The reason lies in the failure of Marxism--both classical and contemporary--to come to terms with the sex division of labour, a process which cuts across both private and public spheres. There is, in fact, a specific denial of the link between such a division and the presence of sex inequality:

The division of labour between the two sexes is determined by quite other causes than by the position of women in society (Engels, 1972:113).

As a result, the question of the impact and variability of a division of labour by sex is seldom posed in Marxist analyses; it is a non-issue. Yet it is precisely this mechanism, other theorists suggest, which frames the marginalization and peripheralization of women in social production. The most Marxist explanations can offer is an understanding of a vertical division of labour wherein women,

by virtue of their location in the domestic sphere, are drawn into a secondary labour market.

. . . a marxist explanation which considers the family-production relationship to be central is able to explain the vertical division of labour: that is, it can explain the tendency for women to be employed in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in the centres of modern industry. . . . It cannot explain, however, the horizontal division of labour: that is, it cannot adequately explain why there has emerged a demand for female labour in some centres of modern industry--such as textiles, clothing and footwear, leather goods, food, drink and tobacco production, as well as certain sectors of engineering--but not in others such as shipbuilding and machine engineering, mining and quarrying, construction and metal manufacture (Beechey, 1978:192).

We are left with an inability to investigate whether there is a link between the organization of production and the sex division of labour, and between a public and a private sex division of labour.

Thus the household, which Marx "assumed away", along with the sex and age division of labour might deter equal participation in production. . . . But the reverse is true as well: unequal participation in production might reinforce the household (Weinbaum, 1978:45).

The above criticisms further suggest a reconsideration of the efficacy of the Marxist criteria for elimination of sex subordination. In other words, if women enter the labour force along the lines of a sex division of labour (whereby 'male jobs' are economically and ideologically superior and there is a variable demand for their labour), then the basis for their lack of control in the family will not erode. In the same context, if domestic labour is socialized but only women perform that labour, has subordination decreased? And finally, is the abolition of the family as an economic unit an inevitable and necessary consequence of socializing the means of production? The latter statements are true only if we

accept the argument that property is the cornerstone of the capitalist family, and that domination is a relationship which stems solely from control over property. However, earlier statements regarding the ahistorical implications for the family and a limited orientation to domination suggest the inability of Marxism to 'make sense' of sex subordination. Rather, the priority of the 'class question' has determined the analysis. As one recent critic suggests:

The marriage of marxism and feminism has been like the marriage of husband and wife depicted in English common law: marxism and feminism are one, and that one is marxism (Hartmann, 1979:1).

This analysis of sex subordination must be able to integrate questions concerning the organization of the labour process and questions concerning the nature of the family household. Marxism provides only a partial understanding of this area.

CHAPTER III

A THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS: SOCIALIST FEMINISM

The dissatisfaction with existing theoretical alternatives for the analysis of sex subordination has led to attempts by socialist feminists to develop an alternative framework. Socialist feminist analysis (also referred to as feminist materialism) is of fairly recent origin.¹ It strives to combine an emphasis on the specificity of female oppression with an historical materialist framework. Still very much in its formative stages, this approach has been developed for the most part by scholars engaged in research on the changing role of women under monopoly capitalism, or in dependent economies caught in an international capitalist system. The thrust of their work is twofold, and focuses on:

- i) the relationship of patriarchal relations to historical modes of production; and
- ii) the relationship of the organization of the household to the organization of production.

¹ It is generally agreed that J. Mitchell's book, Woman's Estate (1971) was the first serious attempt to rework Marxist theory on women through a redefinition of the materialist basis of sex inequality. The most intense period of theoretical work, however, has been since 1975.

Essentially their position involves:

. . . conceptualization of history as the site of the transformation of the social relations of production and reproduction. As far as an analysis of the position of women is concerned, (feminist) materialism would locate that position in terms of the relations of production and reproduction at various moments in history. In doing this, one of its central concerns would be with the determinate character of the sexual division of labour and the implications of this for power relations between men and women at different conjunctures (Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978:7).

The analytical roots of socialist feminism lie within both feminist and Marxist traditions. Their links with feminist analysis are reflected in the attempt to explain patriarchy as a system of sexual power which cuts across the family sphere and the public sphere. However, while socialist feminists recognize the importance of patriarchal ideologies in sustaining power, they reject the ahistorical primacy this concept occupies in feminist analysis. The analytical links with Marxism are found in the focus on the material base of inequality and on the historical variability of status. Moreover, there is a recognition of the importance of domestic or household labour as a form of production, as is suggested by contemporary Marxist arguments. The points of departure from Marxist analysis are found in a reworking of the concept of patriarchy, a reanalysis of the interaction of the family institution and social production, and a reconsideration of the socialist criteria for sexual liberation.

Socialist feminism is not simply a synthesis of Marxism and feminism. Rather, it attempts to go beyond the limitations or inadequacies of each, and to develop new insights into the

phenomenon of sex subordination. A summary of its major analytical contributions follows, together with a consideration of the type of research which has been generated. I will argue that while the research has dealt almost exclusively with capitalist and precapitalist modes of production, it does suggest a basis for investigating the interaction of sex subordination and socialist modes of production.

A. Patriarchy

The attempt to rework the concept of patriarchy was provoked by a dissatisfaction with both the ideological base it was given in feminism, and the limited material base it was given in Marxism. Feminists have been able to document sex subordination prior to the emergence of property (see for example, Gough, 1971), and they have demonstrated its reproduction through cultural ideologies. They have been unable, however, to account for either the form of the appearance of patriarchy in different historical periods or its material base. Socialist feminism attempts to locate patriarchy historically and materially.

The Marxist conception of patriarchy, as discussed in the previous section refers specifically to the form of control of property and labour in the family. As a result, there is no theoretical basis for articulating the linkage between the organization of patriarchy and the organization of social relations external to the family. As with the family unit itself, patriarchy

is perceived as peripheral to the mode of production. The contribution of socialist feminism rests in the attempt to demonstrate the variable nature of patriarchy, and its link to changes in the mode of production. The first step was a clarification of the concept. The initial attempts were primarily descriptive rather than analytical. McDonough and Harrison, for example, described patriarchy in terms of two operations: "the control of women's fertility and sexuality in monogamous marriage" and "the economic subordination of labour" (1978:40). While it is important to recognize the various operational aspects of patriarchy, it is equally important to understand it as a set of relations which interact with other relationships within varying historical circumstances. The latter requires that we articulate both the material and ideological relations of patriarchy.

Capitalism, for example, involves a particular set of relations of production. This is expressed materially in the social division of labour. At the same time capitalist relations involve a particular system of ideological support; a belief system which sustains the material relations of capitalism. At any point in time, both the material and ideological 'faces' of capitalism are defined within a particular set of historical conditions. Competitive capitalism and its organization of productive relations entail a different system of ideological support than monopoly capitalism. For example, while there may be some overlap in the range of cultural values, the role of educational institutions changes fundamentally.

To return to the case of patriarchy as a set of historically specific relations, the question becomes: what are its material and ideological dimensions? Socialist feminism argues that the material expression of patriarchy is the sex division of labour, and that it is supported ideologically by particular cultural values and beliefs regarding sex roles. The sex division of labour has two levels of appearance (Young, 1978:125):

1. it is a systematic allocation of individuals to positions in the process of production on the basis of sex criteria.
2. it is a systematic exclusion of individuals from positions in the production process and social relations at large on the basis of sex criteria.

The ideological support for the particular expression of the sex division of labour is found in the "social construction of gender" (Young, 1978:125). In other words, it involves the socializing process through which symbolic structures frame the acquisition and internalization of the attitudes and behavioural expectations embedded in sex roles.

The conceptualization of the sex division of labour as the systemic allocation within, or exclusion from, production processes is sufficiently broad to allow for the consideration of both the family and the productive spheres. In other words, socialist feminists would ask whether women are allocated solely to production-for-use in particular periods; whether they are excluded from particular types of production-for-exchange in other periods; and, finally, how sex criteria are used, in varying periods, as a basis for allocation and exclusion.

The argument is not that sex subordination is a necessary constant consequence of a sex division of labour. Rather, the primary question is how the particular operation of this division, in conjunction with other relationships (e.g. capitalist relations of production), can intensify or restrict power differentials between men and women. A related question is how economic conditions in various historical periods can intensify or restrict the operation and emphasis of a sex division of labour. This is precisely where socialist feminist analysis goes beyond previous explanatory frameworks; it offers a basis for investigating the interplay of political economy and patriarchy.

To summarize, socialist feminists reconceptualize patriarchy as a set of historically-situated relations of sex subordination within the overall organization of production and symbolic structures. As a force in history, patriarchy interacts with other sets of relationships within varying modes of production. Socialist feminist analysis is not as concerned with the penultimate issue of the origin of subordination in early societal forms; rather it deals with the question of the expression and maintenance of sex subordination in various periods. This is because dominance and subordination are historically-specific concepts; they make sense only in the context of the prevailing social arrangements.

Thus, in order to investigate the expression and maintenance of patriarchy, one must look at both its material and ideological forms. For this reason, socialist feminists argue that both the sex division of labour (and its various levels of operation) and cultural

ideology are important. In their research, they have attempted to demonstrate the historical variability of each dimension of subordination, and at the same time, to suggest the key variables involved in increasing or decreasing sex subordination. In the following section, I discuss the conclusions of this body of research, and summarize the implications for the linkages between patriarchy and capitalist relations of production.

B. Production, Reproduction and Capitalism

As noted earlier, the majority of socialist feminist research has focused on the context of capitalist relations. There is nevertheless a body of work in the anthropology of precapitalist societies which at least implicitly embraces this framework (see, for example, Rubin, 1975; Caulfield, 1977; and Leacock, 1977). In general this work stands as a challenge to both the modernization literature, where subordination is equated with level of development, and the Marxist literature, where subordination is associated with the lack of participation in production.

Sanday (1973), in a cross-cultural comparison using the Murdock ethnographic sample, sheds new light on the question of female status and the conditions under which it is enhanced. Defining female status in the public domain as "the number of economic and political rights which accrue to women" (Sanday, 1973: 1682), she investigated the relationship between participation in subsistence production and female status. Her evidence points to the conclusion that Marxists are correct in positing female participation

in production as a necessary condition for equal status; but it is by no means a sufficient condition. Rather, it is mitigated by other factors such as childcare arrangements, the type of productive activity (e.g., valued market goods), the demand for products of female labour, and the degree of control over production processes. Sanday found, moreover, that the appearance of these factors is not directly correlated with the degree of development in traditional societies.

Sanday's research is important in demonstrating that sex subordination is a variable, whose intensity can be influenced by a particular constellation of factors: production participation, the context of participation, demand for labour, control over production, and responsibility for and compatibility of childcare tasks.

Socialist feminists who have researched sex subordination in the transition to capitalism have found the same factors to be crucial in changing female status. In addition, there have been attempts, outlined below, to investigate the changing form of the appearance of these factors in conjunction with the changing material basis of capitalism. The theoretical goal is to examine the interaction of patriarchy and capitalism, through an investigation of the changing material base and ideological expression of patriarchy in tandem with the development of capitalism.

The nature of the linkage between patriarchy and capitalism is suggested through an historical examination of key periods in the development of capitalism, North American capitalism in particular. Numerous historical studies of this type are available, but a summary

of their major findings indicates the thrust of their argument.

One type of research has examined the participation of women in social production at different stages in the development of capitalism. It has been found that female labour force participation has varied historically; the demand for their labour has been high in periods of expansion, labour scarcity and tertiary sector growth. On the other hand the demand for their labour has been low during periods of low industrial growth and labour market contraction.

The emergence of factory capitalism and the consequent demand for cheap, unskilled labour brought large numbers of women in to the work force. By 1891, women made up 29 percent of the factory labour force in Canada (Kealey: 1973:4). During World War I and II, unprecedented numbers of women entered the labour market. A "war economy" characterized by rapid industrial growth and labour scarcity of males stimulated a 50 percent increase of labour active females between 1940 and 1944 in the United States (Milkman, 1976:86). Finally, the emergence of monopoly capitalism characterized by an increasing development in technological control and rapid growth in the clerical, sales, transportation and communication sectors has created a demand for educated yet relatively cheap labour power. Under these conditions the female participation rate in the labour force in Canada rose from 24 percent in 1951 to 45 percent in 1976 (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978:17).

The entrance of female labour was curtailed during the Depression period, even though the number of women seeking work (to supplement or replace male income in the household) actually

increased (see Humphries, 1976:103). What seems to have occurred is that in the short run the depression provoked a higher unemployment rate for men (7.1 percent male to 4.7 percent female in the U.S. in 1930; see Milkman, 1976:76); but as the recession deepened and males began to compete for previously sex-typed jobs, unemployment for women exceeded that of males (24.6 percent female to 18.6 percent male in the U.S. in 1937; Milkman, 1976:80). Female labour force participation also declined sharply in the post-war period of the late 1940's. Cutbacks in industrial production, reversion to consumer goods production and the return of male workers combined to force the withdrawal of female workers. In Canada, the female participation rate dropped from 33.2 percent in 1945 to 25.3 percent in 1946 (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978:19). The seasonal nature of female labour participation is also an important consideration. Whereas almost 74 percent of male labourers in Canada work over 50 weeks in a year, only 59 percent of women do so; and less than half of that 59 percent work full-time (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978:19).

A second type of study focuses on female labour participation by sector (occupational and industrial). Participation has been consistently concentrated in particular areas. The research on this issue indicates a persisting segregation of female workers into labour sectors characterized by low wages, vulnerability to cutbacks, low capital investment, low prestige, low productivity and low control over production (see Humphries, 1976; Bridenthal, 1976; Mackie and Pattullo, 1977; Tilly and Scott, 1978; Marchak, 1977;

Gross, 1968; and Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978).

In a summary of Canadian labour segregation trends, Armstrong and Armstrong (1978) document both a persistent sex-typing of female jobs and persistent female concentration in certain jobs in the occupational and industrial structures. In the industrial structure, women have become increasingly concentrated in labour-intensive and low productivity sectors (1978:27). In occupational distribution, the concentration of women in clerical categories was found to have increased between 1951 and 1971 (1978:34). Moreover, the persistent sex segregation of female workers has been accompanied by an increase in sex-typing of jobs such as sales clerks and janitors (1978:35). Finally it was found that female jobs rated low on occupational prestige scales and low in terms of worker control over the work situation (1978:42-46).

A third set of studies concerns the role of state intervention in influencing participation and sectoral segregation. This role has been found to be particularly important in certain periods (see McIntosh, 1978; Wilson, 1977; Archibald, 1970; and Humphries, 1976). The sexual segmentation of the labour market in early industrial capitalism was ensured through 'protective' legislation restricting the conditions of female employment. The legislation served a dual purpose: it allowed a flow of cheap labour to continue (into a segmented market), and at the same time it cooled the unions' fears that male labour would be competitively undercut (see Kenneally, 1973). During World War II the state intervened to create facilitating conditions to encourage female labour force

entrance through state-funded day care, equal pay legislation and improved working conditions (see Hill, 1973 for a discussion of Canadian policies). In the same fashion, however, the state played an important role in 'de-mobilizing' women in the post-war years through the withdrawal of child care services, the abandonment of equal pay legislation and the reinforcement of federal civil service laws in Canada barring the employment of married women (Archibald, 1970:17). Moreover, the introduction of family allowances payable to mothers during W.W.II encouraged childrearing as a plausible alternative to labour force participation (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978:19). The allocation of particular welfare and maternity benefits continues as an important form of regulating and 'bolstering' the household family system (for extended discussion see McIntosh, 1978). Finally, a telling indicator of the role of the state in sustaining particular features of sexual segregation, reward distribution, etc. is in its failure to intervene. The absence of effective legislation to counter the above problems, and the inadequacy of the present regulatory agencies, is in itself indicative of the state's orientation to the situation.

A fourth area of study has focused on shifts in the organization of domestic labour in the family which have accompanied shifts in the role of women in production. Many of the tasks formerly performed by the women in the home have been 'taken over' by social production (education, health care, particular commodity production, etc.). As the demand for female labour has increased with monopoly capitalism, the definition of female tasks in the home

has undergone change. This has been facilitated by labour saving devices on the one hand, and by the expansion in consumer commodities on the other (see Bridenthal, 1976). This shift to socialized reproduction tasks, however, is not a consistent process. During periods of economic slowdown and labour cutbacks a re-emphasis on household management and production-for-use has led to increased pressures on women, in terms of reproductive tasks. For example:

During the Great Depression, the long-term trends reversed themselves, and women's unpaid household production became more important than it had been in earlier years. In a sense, the family 'took up the slack' in the economy (Milkman, 1976:81).

This tendency of labour performed by women in the home to 'absorb' certain costs in the productive sphere has also reappeared in late monopoly capitalism. The recent demands for women to become aware consumers, thrifty household managers, and efficient small-commodity producers (i.e. sewing, gardening, etc.) reflects a reorientation to their role in absorbing the cost of inflation.

A fifth set of concerns has been the ideological expression of patriarchy, especially the cultural prescriptions of 'femininity' which have served as the rationale behind the allocation and exclusion of women in social processes. Popular culture forms, such as mass media portrayals of women, have been found to shift in tandem with particular material changes in female productive roles. Ryan (1979), for example, notes the emergence of a prototypical 'feminine mystique', which prepared women for a particular relationship to production during the early stages of American capitalism. Central to this ideological construct was a conception of the ideal women

as submissive, passive and maternal. Moreover, Ryan argues that femininity in this period was seen as providing a social function:

As femininity became installed in home after home, they reasoned, it assumed crucial social significance. First of all, good wives assuage all the alienation men confront in the work force and then send them back refreshed into the competitive fray. Second, a wife would save her husband from any temptation to drink, gamble or carouse, which might distract him from capitalistic enterprise and forfeit his family's comfort (Ryan, 1979:158).

At the same time, a conception of women as different from men in basic nature and temperament justified differential treatment in the sphere of production. In general, it contributed to restricting the entrance of many women (especially women of the bourgeoisie) and to channelling the entrance of those who did come into the labour force. For example, in an examination of the U.S. clerical work force in the early twentieth century, Davies (1979) found a distinct shift in the ideological assumptions and prescriptions regarding the position of women in office work. Whereas in the late nineteenth century, office work was considered the preserve of a male labour force, the expansion of business firms and their office structures engendered an increased demand for educated women workers to fill the low status, dead-end positions. In her examination of the Ladies Home Journal, Davies found a shift between 1900, when women were advised of the physical strains of office work on their 'delicate' nature, and 1916, when it was argued that female 'nature' was well-suited to this type of employment (1979:258).

By 1920 over 90 percent of the typists and stenographers in the United States were women--whose "natural" docility and dexterity made them the ideal workers for these jobs. By harping upon the docility of the female character, writers like Spillman in the Ladies Home Journal provided a

convenient rationalization for women's position on the bottom of the office hierarchy (Davies, 1979:262).

These shifting cultural images of women were reflected in other periods as well. During the Depression years, a mounting ideological campaign, centred on hostility to married women workers, found expression in newspapers and magazines of the period, in union literature and in government endorsements (see Humphries, 1976 and Milkman, 1976). Humphries notes that in the U.S. and Britain this orientation was taken so far as to blame women for "aggravating the depth and duration of the recession by stepping outside of their traditional roles" (1976:104). During the labour scarcity of the war years, however, the trend was reversed with a popularization of the 'Rosie the Riveter' image and the entrance of women into previously sex-typed industrial sectors. Numerous media studies, moreover, have noted the fluctuating trend in positive portrayal of working women in the popular press throughout the 1950's and 60's. Zureik and Frizzell (1977), for example, suggest that Canadian press publications between 1930 and 1950 increased the portrayal of the 'employed heroine', and between 1950 and 1970 decreased this portrayal in addition to structuring it in low status employment sectors. In general, the literature seems to indicate that the content of the ideological forms coincides with particular historical demands on the division of labour by sex.

Similar attempts to come to grips with the interaction of patriarchy and the mode of production have been made in the context of dependent capitalist development. The basis for this work lies in both a rejection of the organic approach to modernization theory,

which focuses on the internal dynamics of change, and a recognition of the differential impact of development on women, which is documented in ethnographic studies (see Elliott, 1977 for a critique of traditional theories of development). The focus of research has been the Third World countries which have undergone industrial development in the context of an international capitalist market.² The analytical thrust has been to investigate the linkages between female labour in the traditional mode and the industrial mode, and between female labour in general and male labour. The argument is that the interaction between precapitalist (i.e., subsistence) and capitalist modes of production in developing countries is facilitated by a sex division of labour which serves the exigencies of capitalist accumulation.

. . . the articulation between modes of production in the periphery, and the corresponding division of labour. . . results in a male wage rate insufficient for familial maintenance and reproduction. The family structure and the attendant division of labour by sex is thus key to the extraction of surplus labour from the non-capitalist mode, for the subsistence production of foodstuffs allows the wage to be less than the cost of production and reproduction of labour power (Deere, 1976:9).

The empirical studies of women in Third World economies demonstrate the operation of two consistent and parallel processes: the absorption of women into the marginal sectors of the economy; and the maintenance of the household unit as a source of subsistence labour, undercutting the costs to the modern sector.

² The international or world capitalist market is divided into core and periphery countries, or centre economies and marginal economies. The point of distinction rests in terms of economic hegemonic control over industrial and finance capital and its impact on the creation of dependent relations from periphery to core.

The expansion of industrial production in a traditional economy has several consequences for female labour use. First, it almost universally weakens or destroys family artisan or handicraft industry; a sector which is largely composed of women (see Chinchilla, 1977:39). Moreover, these women are not reabsorbed into industrial manufacture (see for example De Miranda, 1977, on Brazil; Chinchilla, 1977 on Guatemala; Beneria, 1976 on Spain; and Young, 1978 on Mexico). Women in urban areas are concentrated in the developing tertiary sector, particularly in services. When employed in specialized occupations, they are found in low wage, low rank, and low opportunity sectors. As De Miranda notes they are concentrated in low productivity sectors which are peripheral to the dominant industrial sector (1977:262-263). In the rural economy the increasing mechanization and commercialization of large farms decreases the amount of permanent labour required and leads to the displacement of female labour (see Young, 1978). The agricultural participation of women tends to be concentrated in either seasonal wage labour or subsistence household agriculture (Deere, 1976); in other words female agricultural labour is, as in urban areas, peripheral to the modern sector of agricultural organization. The role of female labour peripheralization to traditional sectors in rural and urban areas is significant in terms of the advantages it allows in the accumulation of capital and in the absorption of costs of production. Again, the mechanism for the realization of these gains is the sexual division of labour. In the tertiary sector, it is a basis for the maintenance of a cheap supply of labour and for

the maintenance of a reserve army of labour. In agricultural production, it allows for the concentration of women in subsistence production; production which contributes to the maintenance of the household unit and lowers the necessary wage to the male worker in the modern sector. The provision of much of the subsistence requisites through female household production is an important factor in profit extraction by the modern sector, as noted in Van Allen's discussion of the African context:

(profit extraction). . . would not be possible except for the unpaid labour of the wives of their African workers, who feed, clothe and care for themselves and their children at no cost whatsoever to the companies. . . the modern sector is dependent for its profits on the free labour done by women (cited in Deere, 1976:10).

The importance of this research for our analysis lies in its demonstration of the linkages between the use of female labour and the organization of production through traditional and modern sectors of a developing economy. As with female labour use in centre economies, it demonstrates the malleability of female labour in conjunction with material exigencies. Where capital-intensive organization is dominant, as in the modern industrial and mechanized agricultural sectors, decreased labour demands are reflected in low female participation. Where labour-intensive organization is dominant, in the tertiary and traditional agricultural sectors, female participation is high. Moreover the latter is characterized by low wages and vulnerability to cutbacks (see De Miranda, 1977).

The household unit in dependent economies, as with centre economies, serves to absorb unwanted female labour and to reproduce fresh labour power. More importantly the organization of subsistence

labour around this unit reduces labour costs in the productive sphere. The crucial difference, as Deere argues, is that household labour in dependent economies creates an independent source of use value production; whereas in centre economies domestic labour "stretches the wage of the worker" (1976:14). Consequently, the contribution of domestic labour in agricultural household units of dependent economies is much more strategic than is the case with centre economies.

C. Linkages

This theoretical review has focussed on the contributions of socialist feminist work for the investigation of sex subordination. It suggests a conceptualization of patriarchy as a set of social relations involving economic and cultural subordination, and it links the appearance of patriarchy in capitalism with prevailing material conditions. It is possible at this point to indicate the major linkages, suggested in the literature, between capitalist relations--both centre and periphery--and the nature of sex subordination. The overall argument is that patriarchy is an efficient system of sex relations which contributes to historically-defined needs for particular forms of labour power and relations of production. The mechanism which cuts through these various processes is the sex division of labour.

First, female labour power can be viewed as a malleable unit for absorbing the costs of production and resolving the crises of production in capitalism.

Second, women provide a particular group with a 'reserve army' of labour, mobilized in a cyclical fashion coincident

to particular patterns of economic growth and labour supply. This argument suggests that women constitute a specific form of the industrial reserve army, discussed by Marx (1967:628-640), in that their role as a disposable labour pool derives specifically from their position in the family institution (see Beachey, 1978:181-195).

Third, the organization of the family unit serves as a means of absorbing surplus female labour, organizing consumption, producing use-values through domestic labour and thereby reducing costs to the state, and reproducing fresh labour power for the productive sphere.

Fourth, female labour in public and private production serves to lower the value of labour power. Low female wage rates are maintained by virtue of the definition of her role in the family institution, and sustain profit in capital accumulation. Moreover, her subsistence labour reduces the cost of the reproduction of labour power to the state.

This analysis suggests a reworking of the Marxist criteria of emancipation. To reiterate, these three criteria are female entrance into production, the socialization of domestic labour, and the abolition of the family unit based on property relations.

The socialist feminist analysis directs our attention to the context of female entrance; the degree of control of females in production; the structure of demand for labour; and the responsibility for childcare. Second, it suggests that much of domestic labour is malleable in the sense that capitalism can, at certain points, organize aspects of domestic labour through social production and retain a sexual division of labour at the same time. Third, it argues that the family unit is more than an institution of property. If the family is retained as the organizing unit for reproduction, consumption and storage of surplus labour at the same time that its property appropriation function is removed, it can continue to reproduce patriarchal relations.

Finally, socialist feminist analysis gives a basis for investigating the role of the capitalist state in intersecting the historical material needs of capitalism and the form and ideology of patriarchy. The state intervenes on two levels: that of production and that of the household unit. In terms of production, the state plays an important role in setting the conditions of participation for women. It can either facilitate or inhibit their entrance, and it can manipulate the context of their entrance. This occurs both on the level of material intervention (through policy) and on the level of ideological support.

In terms of the household, the state can intervene at the level of reproduction of labour power. This can occur through the state's attempted manipulation of fertility rates or through the allocation of particular welfare benefits to sustain the family unit (see McIntosh, 1978). Additionally the state may absorb certain tasks from the family sphere (education, childcare, healthcare) as women move increasingly into the productive sphere. Finally, the intervention may appear at the level of ideological support of particular values or attitudes concerning the role of women in the home.

Certainly the capitalist state cannot be analyzed simply in terms of patriarchy (or vice versa). But it can be seen to play an integral role in assuring the reproduction of labour power and reproduction of the relations of production.

The task now becomes to determine:

- 1) to what extent a socialist system (in this case China)

reproduces patriarchy, and in what form;

2) the material conditions underlying the reproduction of patriarchy; and

• 3) an account of the reasons behind its reproduction.

The framework for investigating these problems will be discussed in the following chapter. The central question will be whether the processes we have found to persist in capitalist development reappear in socialist development; and if so, under what conditions?

CHAPTER IV

SOCIALIST FEMINIST ANALYSIS: THE APPLICATION TO CHINA

A. The Context of Analysis: A Socialist State

The discussion in the preceding chapter focused on the relative merits and disadvantages of the available theoretical alternatives for understanding sexual inequality. It was suggested that socialist feminist work provides a more valuable model for understanding both the constituents of sex subordination and their linkage to other social processes. Additionally, it was argued that the research in this area demonstrates the efficacy of patriarchy as a means of organizing female roles which serves to realize historically-situated productive priorities. It was pointed out that this research has, for the most part, focused on capitalist states in both a national and international context.

My intention now is to apply the perspective of socialist feminism to an examination of a socialist state: the People's Republic of China. The question is whether Chinese socialism removes, redefines or, in fact, reproduces the mechanisms behind patriarchy. In addition, I wish to investigate the historical material conditions underlying the limitation or expansion of sex subordination.

To address these questions fairly, it is first necessary to introduce an important qualification. In the previous section it was

noted that socialist feminist research suggests that the state plays an important role in sustaining sex subordination, largely by implementing policies which enhance either female productive roles or female domestic roles in different periods. It is not the intention of this dissertation to imply that the operation of the socialist state can be simply equated with the operation of the capitalist state, as convergence theorists would suggest. The conditions within which the state operates cannot be ignored. Collective ownership of the means of production, and the absence of a class which appropriates through private ownership, have important consequences for the character of the socialist state. Unfortunately, there is a void within socialist theory in terms of an analytical work on the socialist state apparatus (see Boggs, 1977 and Miliband, 1977). Moreover, it is not a problem which I attempt to resolve in this dissertation. I leave the theoretical question of the structure of the socialist state to others (see Therborn, 1978 or Bahro, 1978); my interest is in its concrete intervention, relative to women, in a historically-situated mode of production.

Nevertheless, it is useful for comparative purposes to briefly specify the broad conditions under which both capitalist and socialist states exist, as well as the differential restraints which influence their operation. A useful comparative clarification of the concept of the state focuses on its components and operations. It defines the state as:

... a set of administrative, policing and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create

and support coercive and administrative organizations (Skocpol, 1979:29).

In a similar vein, Miliband's discussion of the 'functions' of the state is incisive. Essentially, he argues that every state must carry out the following functions, although the conditions of doing so will vary (Miliband, 1977:90):

1. the repressive function: the state must maintain social order within its boundaries.
2. the ideological function: the state must engineer and maintain consent to the form of the system.
3. the economic function: used in the broadest sense, the state must sustain the population and foster productive growth.
4. the international function: the state must foster and protect the 'national' interest in international matters.

While it has been shown in the work of Miliband (1969, and 1977) or Poulantzas (1973) that the state in capitalism operates as a class instrument in the performance of these functions (although we may debate its degree of autonomy), the matter is complicated in the analysis of socialism because of its economic context. As Miliband notes:

. . . the collectivist character of the society precludes it from being such an instrument. . . . Instead, the state may be taken to 'represent' the collective society or the system itself, and to have as its function the service of its needs as these are perceived and defined by those who control the state (1977:114, my emphasis).

The role of the state is thus to define system needs and the strategies for dealing with them. This is not to suggest that the state becomes an instrument for bureaucratic class privilege, although one cannot deny that privilege can accrue in this manner. Rather, the state is still constrained by the "rationality of state

action" in a socialist context; i.e., "state-fostered economic growth. . . and state-fostered provision of social services and cultural developments" (Miliband, 1977:113-114). But a factor which is significant is the degree of power wielded by the apex of the socialist state in the interpretation of needs and the allocation of resources to meet them. This does not imply a purposeful conspiracy of those individuals who hold the reins of state power, but it does recognize the place of the state in intersecting historical material conditions through its planning of direction and implementation of policy. Certainly one must recognize the genuine role of mass parties in socialist states, but these are parties which "are distinguished by their pyramidal structures, with an extreme concentration of power at the top the pyramid" (Miliband, 1977:115).

The above discussion is important to our analysis in that it focuses attention on the more direct role of the state in a planned socialist economy in intervening in the strategic decisions regarding production. For the investigation of women in socialism, it suggests the value of an analysis of the interplay of the historically-situated material conditions which socialist regimes inherit, the state's role in intersecting the material conditions and the necessity of growth and provision of services, and the roles women occupy in the development of the socialist system. (This mode of analysis does not assume the state is an a priori monolith--quite the opposite. It suggests, to rework an old Marxist adage, that socialist states make history, but not under conditions of their own choosing). Both the conditions, and the state's choice of direction

are important. When we focus on the role of the state in socialism, then, we are interested in it as an historical agent whose intervention has consequences for the role of women in socialism.

B. Analytical Issues

The object of this study is to analyze the material changes which have occurred in the development of Chinese socialism, and their relationship to the social position of women in China. The framework of the analysis is the interplay between the organization of the productive sphere and the organization of the domestic sphere, and the consequences of this interplay for sex subordination. Additionally, the intervention of the state is considered in its role in the extraction and deployment of social resources.

The primary objective of the preceding chapter was the development of a theoretical analysis outlining the factors involved in sex subordination, and the suggestion of an explanation for why these factors appear in a particular form under capitalism. Their form of appearance has been linked to the strategic impact of a sex division of labour (in the labour market and the household) for increasing accumulation and absorbing costs in production. To reiterate, the factors or criteria by which we can investigate the degree of subordination or emancipation are:

1. participation in production
2. context of participation
3. demand for labour
4. control over production
5. organization of childcare and domestic tasks

The investigation of these factors has yielded a series of propositions regarding their appearance in the historical development of capitalist relations. These tendency statements suggest that these factors appear in a particular form which results in the economic and political subordination of women as a group. In summary, form the more important of these tendency statements are:

- i. Female participation rates tend to be higher in labour-intensive industry than capital-intensive industry.
- ii. Female participation rates tend to be higher in tertiary and service sectors.
- iii. Female participation rates tend to be higher in seasonal agricultural labour.
- iv. Female participation rates tend to be higher in subsistence agricultural labour.
- v. Female participation rates tend to be higher in traditional, labour-intensive agricultural sectors.
- vi. The proportion of female workers tends to be higher in traditionally organized, non-dominant spheres.
- vii. The proportion of female workers tends to be higher in those sectors of production which are vulnerable to cutbacks.
- viii. The wages of female workers, agricultural and non-agricultural, tend to be lower than male workers' wages.
- ix. In periods of high industrial growth, female labour is increasingly absorbed and diverted toward traditional sectors of production.
- x. In periods of low industrial growth, female labour is more likely to be withdrawn from the labour force.
- xi. In periods of high industrial growth, state intervention is more likely to create facilitating conditions for female labour entrance.
- xii. In periods of low industrial growth, state intervention is more likely to restrict the entrance of female labour.

- xiii. In periods of low economic growth, domestic production-for-use in the family unit is more likely to increase.
- xiv. The availability of birth control resources is negatively associated with the labour demands of the state.
- xv. Popular media forms are more likely to express traditional stereotypes of women during period of low economic growth, and non-traditional stereotypes during periods of high economic growth.

Socialist feminism then focuses our attention on the significance of particular relationships in the examination of sex subordination. These relationships are:

1. The relationship between the use and distribution of female labour power and the economic priorities of the state.
2. The relationship between the distribution of female productive labour and the mode of economic organization (i.e. traditional/modern; capital-intensive/labour-intensive; industrial/non-industrial).
3. The relationship between the distribution and organization of female social labour and the organization of female domestic labour.

The questions which interests me here are: the form of appearance of these relationships in the development of a socialist mode of production, and the character of the linkages between the economy, the state and women in the Chinese socialist context.

C. Time Frame

The focus of my analysis will be on the People's Republic of China, with particular emphasis on the 1949-1962 period. The choice of this emphasis reflects two key factors. First and foremost, I am interested in the period of the emergence of a socialist mode of production and the break with a capitalist mode of production. It

was during this period that the most significant shifts in economic conditions and state policy occurred. Certainly, there have been major shifts in China since 1962; but they have reflected a struggle between two competing models of socialism (or the "two roads to socialism") which emerged in the first decade of power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Thus it is important to determine the character and consequences of each model in the period of its formulation and implementation, particularly in terms of the patterns each created for the position of women.

The second reasons for the focus on this time frame is the lack of aggregate data after 1961. A virtual "statistical blackout" followed the demise of the Great Leap Forward in 1960. This was provoked on the one hand by a politically motivated reluctance to release data which indicated the dismal failure of certain strategies, and on the other hand by the withdrawal of Soviet statistical and technical expertise which accompanied the Sino-Soviet split. This blackout became much more intense during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1968), when the situation essentially dissolved into statistical anarchy. The situation has improved considerably in the past decade, making it possible to draw certain comparisons between my primary period of investigation and the contemporary situation.

To repeat, however, I am primarily interested in the first decade of building Chinese socialism. This period encompasses four discrete historical phases, distinguished by specific approaches to economic growth, and by specific forms of state intervention.

i. The New Democratic Period (1949-1952):

this is a period marked by land reform and redistribution in the rural areas; tolerance toward the private business and industrial sector; expansion of state enterprise; and by the implementation of liberalized marriage and labour reform.

ii. The First Five Year Plan (1953-1957):

modeled after the Soviet Five Year Plan, this phase was characterized by an attempt to develop, as quickly as possible, a heavy industrial base, at the expense of agriculture and light industry. The expectation in this strategy was that overall economic growth would be facilitated through a 'spread effect' from the growth in heavy industry. It is a period of massive capital investment in industry; heavy migration to urban areas; initial collectivization of rural land units; and appropriation of private enterprise.

iii. The Great Leap Forward (1958-1959):

based on Mao Zedong's version of 'walking on two legs', the Leap aimed at the mass mobilization of labour, stressing the simultaneous development of agriculture and industry, heavy and light industry, and modern and traditional technology. In a context of limited capital, the state's strategy was to use capital intensive means in heavy industry, and to substitute labour for capital in other development. Instead of a 'spread effect' strategy from urban industry to

rural agriculture, the Maoist model encouraged the dispersal of industry to rural areas, and the increase of productivity in agriculture as a source of accumulation to be fed back into industry. Both urban commune and rural commune production were organized against this policy backdrop.

iv. The Crisis Years (1960-1962):

in a period of successive bad harvests and severe droughts and floods, the Leap model gave way to short-term strategies for stabilizing the economy. Commune organizations were replaced by small scale production units, private land reclamation and agriculture production emerged, and light industry was suspended on a large scale.

D. Data Sources

There are three types of data used in this study:

- i. Macroeconomic indicators and aggregate labour force statistics including such factors as population growth, size of labour force, labour absorption rate, agriculture and industrial productivity, and fixed capital investment. These indicators will provide a material profile of the development of Chinese socialism.
- ii. CCP policy interventions including general economic policies and female specific policies concerning female labour mobilization, protective legislation, birth control, etc. These policy positions will provide a profile of the strategic

choices made by the state apparatus in developing a mode of economic organization and production.

- iii. Sex subordination indicators including such factors as female employment in social production, sectorial vulnerability, domestic production, wages, fertility rates, daycare availability, and birth control access. The form of appearance of these various criteria will be examined for the degree of fluctuation exhibited throughout the period under examination.

The focus of evaluation of the above data is the extent to which the indicators of sex subordination fluctuate or remain constant, the economic conditions under which this occurs, and the extent to which the state has intervened through policy manipulation on both levels. The purpose of the analysis is not to test hypotheses with measures derived from classic empirical methodology. Rather, in historical investigation such as this, one attempts as best one can to uncover patterns of historical action and their implications. As such it is an exploratory investigation, one which attempts to analyze particular relationships within a historical context, and to offer a plausible interpretation of the form of the appearance of the relationships.

There are difficulties involved in carrying out historical case analysis, not the least of which is the problem of distance from the case. While ideally a case study would involve close proximity between the analyst and the milieu, this is not possible in this particular project. Accordingly, it is necessary to rely on secondary materials dealing with the period in question. This leads

us to the question of whether we can 'trust' our sources of information regarding China. In this research I rely on three sources of information: secondary data pools, CCP policy directives, and historical accounts.

1. Secondary data pools:

The issue of the statistical reliability of the data is often raised when considering research about China. It is an issue which has been dealt with at length in several specialized studies (see for example, Li, 1962; Rawski, 1976; Liu, 1968; Chen, 1975; Oksenberg, 1969; and Eckstein, 1980), and which demands attention in any study which seeks fairly accurate information regarding the development of China's economy.

The major question is that of the level of 'statistical competence' in China throughout our period of interest. It is quite clear in academic treatments of this question that the level of statistical competence has varied considerably in China since the revolution. Prior to the revolution, the Nationalist government carried out fairly competent statistical surveys of agricultural and industrial outputs, although population data varied widely depending on the region (see Liu and Yeh, 1965 for discussion).

Between 1949 and 1952 the CCP was primarily concerned with consolidation of their authority and made little effort to collect information on the extensive private sector. What little data collection there was concerned state-owned industrial and transport sectors (Emerson, 1967:408). Some minimal data collection took place in the six military-administrative regions established by the CCP.

but regional variations prevented accurate comparison.

This Rehabilitation Period ended in 1952, and the CCP launched its initial attempts at centralized economic planning and the socialization of the remaining private sector enterprises. To do so effectively required a centralized means of statistical reporting upon which economic strategies could be based. Thus in October, 1952 the State Statistical Bureau (S.S.B.) was formally created to furnish data on a national scale. Reporting directly to the State Planning Commission, the S.S.B. produced two surveys in late 1952, one on industrial/agricultural outputs and one on employment. While there is certainly some uncertainty as to their accuracy, since they were largely a collection of already available data, there is agreement that these reports provided a reasonable estimate for the period (Emerson, 1967:409).

Beginning in 1953 the S.S.B. established a more systematic reporting system, whereby administrative units at the local and regional levels in agricultural and industrial enterprise, regularly submitted standardized economic reports on a variety of factors. This was augmented in 1954 by the introduction of "double-track" reporting, wherein enterprises also reported to their appropriate state ministries, who in turn reported to the S.S.B. (Emerson, 1965:13-15). Between 1954 (when the administrative regions were abolished) and 1957, there were a series of national economic surveys carried out on employment, employment characteristics, industrial and agricultural production, handicraft production and family income. Together these sources of information provide a data set for the

period between 1952 and 1957 which is "quite respectable by the standards of other low-income nations" (Rawski, 1979:149). The basis for confidence is enhanced when one also considers the various specialized economic reports issued by particular ministries, women's organizations or party functionaries.

There is less confidence in the officially-released primary data of the Great Leap Forward period (1958-59). Decentralization of statistical control, variance in collection techniques and vastly exaggerated production figures due to political goals led to a significant erosion in statistical competence. For this reason it is often necessary to rely on reconstructed estimates for this period. Such reconstruction, whether on employment figures or production outputs, are arrived at in the secondary literature by applying tests of consistency to the various sets of information. As one sinologist has noted, this task is made easier in the case of China due to particular features in its mode of production.

Low per capita income and the associated simplicity of economic structure permit the analyst to track the performance of important segments of China's economy by use of only a few variables. Thus, output figures for grain and cotton can be used to project farm output; cotton production and imports determine the output of cotton textiles. . . (Rawski, 1979:152).

The Crisis Period (1960-62) saw a reversal in economic policies accompanied by a complete withdrawal of Soviet technical assistance. The latter certainly weakened bureaucratic statistical competence, although attempts were made to re-establish centralized reporting. Unfortunately very little of the data collected were ever released in aggregate form. Estimates for this period generally are based on figures contained in political speeches, particular

newspaper articles or specialized organizational communiques.

Since the close of the Cultural Revolution Period in 1968, during which virtually no statistical information was released, statistical competence has steadily increased in China. This has been accompanied by a willingness to release more information to foreign analysts. Moreover, a consistent observation by sinologists since 1949 is that there is no indication that China has "two sets of books" statistics; one for China and one for external use (see Rawski, 1976; Eckstein, 1966 and Perkins, 1966).

This is not to say the use of statistical data in China is problem-free. Several significant problems remain. The first concerns the uneven quality of data which have been released by the Chinese. Data on heavy industry and modern transport, for example, tend to be more reliable than those on agriculture, handicrafts and traditional transport, due largely to the nature of the sector involved.

The differences are largely a function of the ease with which basic economic data can be collected. Thus, it is generally easier to collect more or less reliable economic information for large scale as compared to small scale enterprises and for state as compared to private establishments (Eckstein, 1966:276).

More caution is thus required in using reconstructed estimates based on the less reliable sectors. Every effort has been made to compile secondary data which make clear the actual basis of estimation, and which indicate the degree of reliability.

A second problem concerns the selective nature of the data gathered. For particular sectors and particular occupations, for example, I have been unable to find any national data set regarding

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sex differences in wages. This is because such information was never collected or, if collected, never released. In this case there are several reconstructed data sets available which rely on either provincial and regional data, or 'model' samples (such as a specific commune) in order to project national patterns (see for example, Emerson, 1967 and Schran, 1969). For other factors, such as daycare availability, the data are better for some years than others. Consequently, generalizations can only be drawn tentatively, given the incomplete scope of the data. This does not imply that the statistical data are therefore useless; only that they must be approached with caution, and balanced with an examination of other information sources.

Finally, a third problem concerns the failure of Western specialists to agree on the accuracy of various macroeconomic indicators (see Dernberger, 1980). All estimates of these indicators are based upon the officially-released data, which are either accepted at face value or subjected to various adjustments. Because of the varying methodological assumptions made by different sinologists, it is often difficult to obtain a clearly consistent economic profile. Nevertheless, I do attempt in the dissertation to use those data sources which tend to enjoy wider acceptance than others, which indicate the basis of their adjustments and which are more consistent with other studies. Moreover, I indicate where there is reason to doubt the accuracy of certain estimates. Also, it is important to note that most Western economists agree that while specific official data estimates of particular indicators may be

subject to error, the depicted changes over time are reliable (see for example the collection of essays on sector data in Eckstein, 1980). When these data are combined with other sources of information, such as policy statements and qualitative accounts of economic conditions, the ability to engage in thorough analysis is therefore enhanced.

2. CCP Policy Directives:

There is a dangerous tendency among foreign observers to see the Chinese political system as a monolithic structure which has total latitude within the policy formulation process. This is an oversimplification. China has a highly complex political structure, one which is characterized by a range of political/administrative organs from small local units to the executive bureau of the Party. In order to completely demonstrate the nature of interventions used by the socialist state apparatus it would be necessary to investigate the entire extent of the political process including intra-party communications, inter-ministry directives and local level conferences. Such is not the purpose in this study. Rather, I am interested in the content of general policy directives concerning the organization of production (i.e., in terms of establishing the economic priorities of the centralized state executive), and the content of specific policy directives concerning the involvement of women (i.e., in terms of their relationship to social production and to family or domestic labour).

The availability of this information prior to 1954 is somewhat limited by the lack of a strong central political structure

in that period. Due to the variability of problems faced in the six military/administrative regions policy directives often emerged within a regional administration along specialized interests. With the consolidation of a central political organizational structure in the Central Committee in 1954, the Party established a centralization of decision-making on both general and specialized issues (see Lieberthal, 1976:5-9, for discussion). There are numerous excellent bibliographies available which serve as a guide to research in this field, (for example, Wang, 1976; Lieberthal, 1976; Bowie and Fairbank, 1962; Emerson, et al., 1976; Hsia, 1976; and Chen, 1963). In addition, there are more specialized bibliographies concerning marriage and family policy, (Meijer, 1971; and Buxbaum, 1978) and women specifically (Croll, 1974). These bibliographies direct the researchers to two primary sources of information: officially-released directives (from both the Central Committee and specific ministries), and reports of policy implementations appearing in the Chinese media (including publications for both internal and foreign consumption). The latter tends to be the more lucrative source for information given the ties of the national media to Party communication channels. Translation of the Chinese media are carried out by both the Chinese (through the New China News Agency or English language journals such as Peking Review) and foreign observers (such as the Survey of the China Mainland Press published by the U.S. Hong Kong Consulate). Thus, the inaccessibility of primary Chinese-language sources, while troubling, does not prevent thorough secondary analyses.

3. Historical Accounts

A final source of information on China are reports by, and interviews with, observers of particular periods in Chinese development. While certainly not complete in themselves as sources for the study of China, the qualitative reports of "China watchers," both internal and external, are useful in sensitizing us to the overall dimension of a period. They point to significant political, cultural, and economic developments in various sectors of Chinese society. Moreover, such reports often provide information which is not available in statistical data or policy statements, i.e., the response of the individual to his/her historical context. They can thus indicate the consistency of state action and popular response.

In conclusion, the data are available to accomplish the analytical task at hand. Specifically, in the following chapters, I investigate the extent to which shifts in material conditions and sex subordination occur within a defined time period, and the extent to which they are intersected by shifts in policy formation and implementation.

CHAPTER V

LEGACY OF THE PAST

In order to discuss the relationship of sex subordination and the socialist state in post-liberation China, it is useful to first outline the historical legacy of pre-liberation China. Two factors are important in that legacy. The first is the traditional organization of male and female roles in pre-revolutionary China. The hierarchial, and often brutal, nature of the traditional Chinese family and social structure represented a firmly entrenched source of resistance to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) reforms. This was particularly the case among the large rural population, estimated to be 90 percent of the total population in 1949 (Emerson, 1967:407).

The second significant component of the legacy is the CCP's early experiences in formulating a response to both the traditional ordering of sex roles and the economic crises in the pre-socialist economy. An examination of the CCP in its formative stages will serve to articulate the Party's conceptualization of and response to the "woman's question", and it will uncover the initial socioeconomic policies implemented in the early 'liberated areas'. The lessons learned from these pre-liberation experiences constituted an important point of departure for policy formulation in the period following victory over the Nationalist forces.

It is not my intention in this chapter to engage the reader in a detailed examination of the Republican era in China (1912-49); an impressive collection of reference materials on this period in history is available already. Rather, I wish to indicate in summary fashion the major characteristics of pre-socialist China and the role played by the CCP in offering an alternative material and ideological program.

Nor am I concerned here with a discussion of pre-republican China, although the plight of women in the 'old regime' is certainly well-documented.¹ The more graphic and brutal legacies of Imperial China are a popular theme in historical reconstructions. Practices such as foot-binding, female infanticide, child prostitution and bride-suicide have held a persistent fascination for Western historians interested in the situation of women in 19th and early 20th century China. The cornerstone of the maintenance of these practices was Confucianism, an interrelated philosophy of moral principles and behavioural guidelines which defined the basic social order of Imperial China. It was a social order circumscribed by a bureaucratic administrative structure, wherein rigid examination procedures set apart a privileged class of Confucian scholars, and by a hierarchial kinship system in which filial loyalty was the foundation. The dominant class in this social structure was the

¹ This is not to imply that there was no resistance to the treatment of women in traditional China. In fact there was a strong tradition of criticism, both in 19th century literary circles (see Ropp, 1976) and early revolutionary movements, such as the Taiping Rebellion (see Shih, 1967).

gentry--a powerful elite whose dominance rested on both administrative position and land tenure (for discussion, see Wolf, 1969; Moore, 1966 and Skocpol, 1979). For the vast peasant class, subsistence was sought through the procurement of land--either through private ownership, rental from a landlord, or a combination of both.

A striking feature of Imperial China's agrarian society was the existence of the tsu, or clan group. As an extended kinship body, the tsu joined members of the gentry and peasantry within one social entity, thus creating an important bond between ruled and ruler.² Membership was determined by patrilineal descent; women belonged to their father's clan group until marriage, whereupon they were included in their husband's clan. As Stacey notes, however, a daughter's name was never even entered in her father's genealogy, and upon her own death, only her family surname was recorded in her husband's kinship records (1979:61). The impact of this practice was more than merely symbolic. Traditional clan ties played a key economic role, in that often land owned collectively by a clan was rented out to individual members, an important consideration in

² Moore (1966) argues that the clan system was 'the one binding link between the gentry and peasantry, thus explaining peasant conservatism in traditional China. One can also see it as a crucial factor which distinguishes Chinese 'feudal' society from the classical European model. In addition, it is important to note the non-hereditary nature of the Chinese aristocratic system (See M. Freedman, 1966 for discussion). This is not to suggest that Imperial China was not a feudal society characterized by economic paternalism and customary privileges. Rather, it does suggest that one must take account of the unique features of Chinese feudalism.

areas with little arable land.³ Women, however, had no rights of access to land given their precarious and marginal position in clan structure. Access was indirect, as members of households wherein the male heads received land allotments. In a society where land was the fundamental resource, the emphasis on patrilineal descent combined with patrilocal residence patterns created a social structure which virtually excluded women from any material basis for social mobility. This was reflected in other social practices, as well, such as footbinding, arranged marriages, the sale of daughters and/or wives during periods of hardship and, in certain dire circumstances, female infanticide.⁴

In the early years of the twentieth century, a series of factors combined to bring about the collapse of Imperial China. The Qing (Ch'ing) Dynasty (1644-1911) of the Manchu empire was brought to a close following a series of anti-imperial rebellions which took place throughout the nineteenth century.⁵ Two key factors in this process were the escalating limitations on the regime's sovereignty, brought about by the intrusion of Western imperialistic powers, and

³ The importance of clans was subject to regional variation. In southern China, for example, clans tended to be larger and own more land than clans in the north (Wolf, 1969:108-110).

⁴ It is important to note that while these practices varied regionally, none was associated exclusively with one class over another. For example, while footbinding was more prevalent in the north and among the upper echelon, it was found in all regions among all classes (Stacey, 1979:62).

⁵ Useful background material on the collapse of dynastic control can be found in Wakeman, 1975; Kuhn, 1970; Wright, 1968 and Skocpol, 1979.

the increasing pressures upon a strained agrarian economy, brought about by high population growth in the context of limited land resources.

While the Imperial order was ostensibly replaced with a republic, in reality the early years were marked by the proliferation of regional 'warlords', and the absence of a national political/administrative structure. The tenuous hold of any national power was, in fact, a recurring problem throughout the entire Republic Period.⁶ The years between the founding of the republic in 1912 and the victory of the communist forces in 1949 were marked by a series of important struggles, alliance and crises. In the context of this turbulent period, we can begin to locate the issue of sex subordination and its relationship to the Chinese Communist Party.

A. Sex Structure: A Profile

A preliminary examination of the structure of sex roles in early 20th century China is useful in identifying the context in which the CCP first formulated an understanding of, and response to, the 'woman question'.

The collapse of the Imperial order in 1911 brought about a decline in many former traditions, not the least of which was the Confucian system of literati privilege. Various other traditions, however, proved more tenacious, particularly among the large rural population. One of the more critical remnants of the past was the

⁶ See J. Chesneaux et al., 1977 for a detailed discussion of the various political and regional rivalries, during the Republic period, which weakened the possibility of centralized power.

Confucian family system. The conception of the family as the central unit within the social structure, with clearly articulated lines of authority and responsibility, was firmly entrenched among the peasantry. Consequently, the traditional mechanisms for maintaining this structure, such as arranged marriages, patrilineality, restriction of females from property or political office, ancestor worship, preference for male heirs, and a strict sex division of labour continued to be enforced.⁷

The real challenge to Confucian principles concerning the family and women came from the educated circles who were centred largely in urban areas. This challenge was part of a larger political struggle, the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to 1921. The latter was really a series of movements which became interlocked in a common struggle against both the control exercised by foreign powers in China and the traditional cultural values of 'old China'. At the same time, it was a movement against those internal groups in Chinese society who had permitted and facilitated the escalation of foreign penetration. The scope of the protests was reflected in the combination of the participant groups; students and intellectuals, the indigenous bourgeoisie, left-wing political groups and, to a lesser extent, labour unions. However, one significant group was missing from the list of players in this political drama..

The peasantry was almost entirely absent from the May Fourth Movement. The rural world was completely cut off

⁷ An excellent discussion of the Confucian family system and its relationship to the structure of the peasant economy in this period can be found in Stacy (1979). A useful source for descriptive treatment can be found in Levy (1971).

from this national crisis, whose protagonists were the new urban classes (Chesneaux et al., 1977:73).

The incorporation of feminist critique in the May Fourth Movement was an integral part of the attack on traditional culture and Confucian values. While feminist groups predate this period (for example, the suffragette movement was quite strong following the 1911 rebellion), they reached their pinnacle in popularity during this time. Demands for prohibition of footbinding, freedom in marriage choice, educational opportunity, inheritance rights and universal suffrage were popular themes in the literature of the time. The underlying philosophy of their arguments was strongly influenced by a Western model of individualism.

The 'woman's problem' was usually viewed in terms of the generalized emancipation or independence of the individual from traditional familial and societal restraints. This period marked the height of Western influence on its definition. The ideology of individualism brought in from the West stressed the status, rights and obligations of the individual (Croll, 1978:82).

This approach was reflected as well in the two major feminist organizations which emerged in this period: the Women's Suffrage Organization, focusing on female participation in politics, and the Women's Rights League, focusing on a wide range of status demands from education opportunity to marriage choice (Leith, 1973:48-49). Membership in both organizations was primarily composed of educated urban women, and their activity was directed at reform in the legislative realm.

Coexisting with feminist groups in this period, yet remaining structurally and ideologically distinct, were various organizations of female workers. The encroachment of foreign capital, coupled with

the expansion of the domestic bourgeoisie, had facilitated the growth of an urban working class in the early 20th century. While still a small proportion of the total labour force, estimates for 1921 indicate a workforce of 1.5 million involved in major capitalist production (Chesneaux et al., 1977:123). The largest proportion of workers (approximately 300,000) were located in the textiles sector, a major component in the rising industrial mode, and one which was traditionally based on female labour. Women comprised 47 to 65 percent of the workers in textile factories between 1914 and 1920, and 90 percent of all silk workers (Johnson, 1976:23). Their role, moreover, was not strictly confined to only textile production. Rather, it is clear from the research on this period of early capitalist development that women played a significant role in the total urban industrial labour force; largely because of the prevalence of light industry (Chesneaux, 1968). By 1928 women represented 70 percent of the total industrial labour force in China, and 58.7 percent of the labour force in large-scale factories (Weinbaum, 1976:36). It is important to note the regional variations in their participation. Fang, for example, notes that certain cities such as Shanghai had a high proportion of female industrial workers (56 percent) whereas others in the more conservative Northeast, such as Tientsin, had only a small proportion (6 percent) of female workers (Fang, 1931:31).

The conditions of work these women faced were severe. Twelve-hour days, seven-day weeks, low wages, crowded working spaces and a total lack of protective safety measures were common to most

industrial sectors, but to female sectors in particular. The average wages of female workers, for example, were generally much lower than male workers, even in the predominantly female sector of textiles (see Table 1). Then again, some female workers received no wages at all. A popular practice in recruiting workers for spinning factories was to 'buy' the labour of peasant daughters. 'Labour recruiters' would canvass rural areas for daughters, whose maintenance they would guarantee to the family in return for their labour (Chesneaux, 1968:34-37).

In addition to their significant role in industrial labour, women played an important part in labour strikes before, during and after the May Fourth Movement. Between 1909 and 1913 women workers in silk filatures struck twenty times (Croll, 1978:73). In 1922, 20,000 female silk workers went on strike in Shanghai alone (Johnson, 1976:23); a minimum of seventeen other strikes by women took place in 1922 ranging in size from 70 to 3,000 women (Leith, 1973:58). Although not always successful in attaining their demands, the strikes by women workers were significant both in demonstrating their capacity for militancy and in laying the basis for early organizational overtures by the Chinese Communist Party.

Before turning to a discussion of these 'overtures' by the CCP, it is first necessary to consider the structure of female labour among the large rural population during the same period.⁸ As previously noted, reform movements in this time had effect on the

⁸ Buck estimated the rural population at 80 to 95 percent of the total population between 1929 and 1933. Other estimates suggest as low as 75 percent or as high as 97 percent (1956:358-365).

Table 1: Average Wages in Textiles, 1920¹

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

SOURCE: E. Croll, 1978:104.

¹ Croll bases her table on data contained in Lin Tung-Hai, The Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in China. Shanghai, 1933:68.

life of the peasantry; this was also true for feminist appeals. While urban, middle class women were benefitting from gradual improvements in such areas as educational facilities (Table 2), the old traditions proved to be more tenacious for rural women (Table 3).

The involvement of women in the industrial work force during the twenties was not matched by their participation in agricultural work, a sector overwhelmingly controlled by males. In the late 1920's, males performed 80 percent of total farm labour in China, compared to 13 percent by women and 7 percent by children (Buck, 1956:292). Regional variations in these participation figures are correlated with the nature of agricultural activity. In southern double-cropping rice regions, for example, the participation of women in farm work was much higher (30 percent) than in the northern wheat regions (10 percent), where seasonal demands on labour were more limited (Buck, 1956:293).

Subsidiary labour in agricultural regions was an important source of additional income for the rural peasant household, especially in light of the scarcity of large family farms.⁹ Buck's research indicates that by the end of the second decade, subsidiary work accounted for 14 percent of the total income accumulated by farm families engaged in both agricultural and nonagricultural labour (1956:298). Other research for the same period suggests that the reliance on nonagricultural pursuits for supplementary income was

⁹ Weinbaum (1976:36) notes that between the 1870's and the 1920's, the average crop area per farm had decreased by two-thirds.

Table 2: Increase in Schools for Female Students, 1910-1919

	1910	1914	1917	1919
No. of schools	42,444	59,796	128,048	134,000
No. of teachers	185,566	200,000	326,417	326,000
No. of students	1,625,534	3,849,554	4,269,197	4,500,000

SOURCE: E. Croll, 1978:91.

¹ Croll bases her table on data contained in M.T.Z. Tyau, China Awakened. London, 1922:4.

Table 3: Schooling and Literacy of Rural Population, 1929-33 (percent).

Region and Sex	Total ¹	Schooling			Literacy		
		None	Same	Unknown ²	Illiter-ate	Liter-ate	Unknown
China:							
Male	100.0	54.1	45.2	0.7	69.3	30.3	0.4
Female	100.0	97.7	2.2	0.1	98.7	1.2	0.1
North China:							
Male	100.0	57.7	41.7	0.6	72.9	26.6	0.5
Female	100.0	98.0	1.9	0.1	99.1	0.8	0.1
South China:							
Male	100.00	50.2	49.1	0.7	65.2	34.6	0.2
Female	100.00	97.3	2.6	0.1	98.3	1.6	0.1

SOURCE: J.L. Buck, 1956: 373.

¹ Excludes children under seven years of age in all areas.² Includes persons known to have attended school for whom type of education is unknown.

much more pronounced for many peasant households. In the Chengtu region, for example, tenant peasant households derived 82 percent of their income from non-farming work, compared to 40 percent for owner peasant households (H.D. Fong in Weinbaum, 1976:37).

The participation of women in subsidiary labour was a significant element in bringing additional income into the family unit. Twenty percent of rural women in Buck's study were engaged in both agricultural and subsidiary labour, of which domestic service and home industry were the primary pursuits (1956:372). Also popular as methods of supplementing family income were employment in rural, small-scale industries and migration to urban areas for factory employment. An interesting aspect, however, of female subsidiary labour in this period, was its increasing displacement by the rising modern organizational mode. In an interesting historical analysis covering the late 1800's and early 1900's, Weinbaum (1976) argues that the increasing penetration of foreign capital had two very significant consequences for the sex division of labour. On the one hand women were, as we have already noted, increasingly absorbed in the emerging industrial sector as a prime source of cheap labour. At the same time, however, traditional forms of home industry, especially in rural areas, were increasingly displaced by modern factory organization. The three essential elements in their displacement were the decline in the use of homespun yarn; the increasing entrance of peasant males into the traditional female sector of textiles as income from this sector rose (for example, the participation of male peasant weavers in rural handicraft workshops);

and finally the competition of urban factories, both in drawing the labour of young, single women and in their more efficient production process (1976:35-40).

The thrust of her argument is that female labour in nonagricultural employment allowed for both the continued maintenance of the household unit among the peasantry and the acceleration of capital accumulation among the foreign and domestic bourgeoisie. At the same time, however, women lacked any stability in their relationship to nonagricultural labour; rather, they were subject to transitions in the dominance of one mode or sector of production over another. Stacey, for example, notes the displacement of traditional female labour in the silk home industry of Kaihsienkang with the introduction of factory silk production (1979:123). The small-scale farm holdings could not absorb the surplus labour, and the loss of income from silk production destroyed the local economy. A significant means of adaptation to the crisis was the increased migration of single women to urban factories, in order to continue a flow of supplemental income to the household.

B. Women and the Chinese Communist Party

The particular type of sex structures found in urban and rural China has important implications for the initial organizational attempts by the Chinese Communist Party. The visibility of women workers in particular sectors of urban industry, combined with the role of social and cultural criticism of sex roles bequeathed by the urban-centred May Fourth Movement, created a situation wherein urban

women were the more 'logical' target for radical appeals. The conservative orientation of the rural population in general, coupled with the more pronounced social and cultural isolation of these women in particular, discouraged attempts to politicize the female peasantry. This is not to suggest that the reasons behind an urban organizational strategy were solely historically-defined features of the Chinese social structure at the time. The more important factor in determining early political strategy was the guidance and direction offered by the international Communist movement, and by Soviet advisors in particular. The incorporation of Lenin's conception of the proletariat as the vanguard of the revolutionary movement had significant consequences for a narrowed vision of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry.¹⁰

As the intellectual inheritors of the May Fourth Movement, there was already a strong foundation of 'equal rights' philosophy among the founders of the CCP in 1921. This was reflected in their first official 'policies' regarding women, contained in the 1922 Manifesto of the Second Congress (Brandt et al., 1966:64-65). Among the policy objectives articulated was a commitment to universal suffrage, elimination of sex discriminatory laws, and protective legislation for child and female labour. At the same time a separate body for women's issues, the Women's Department, was formed with the mandate to organize and advise on the behalf of women. The sympathy

¹⁰ Useful sources on the early years of the CCP are Wilbur (1968), Wilbur and How (1956), Chesneaux (1968) and Brandt et al., (1952).

of the new political party for feminist demands for full equality was, at the same time, mixed with a criticism of the 'bourgeois' nature of feminism as a movement. Johnson, for example, notes that the term feminism, when it appeared in early CCP literature, seldom occurred without a qualifying word such as "narrow or one-sided (p'ien-mien te)" (1976:17). As a result, there was little attempt to forge organizational links with the various feminist groups focusing on women's rights; rather, the CCP sought to make contact with women workers in the urban factories. This was especially true during the wave of labour unrest which swept China between 1921 and 1923. As discussed earlier, the participation of women in strike activity during this period was significant in both their numbers and their militancy. The success of the Women's Department in organizing women workers is noteworthy; Party estimates for 1922 to 1925 claim the organization of 10,000 women (Johnson, 1976:24).

Beginning in 1924 and following Soviet advice, the Chinese Communist Party entered into a period of alliance with the urban-based, nationalist Guomindang Party (GMD). In their common struggle against both foreign imperialist powers and internal warlords, GMD and CCP strategists worked on several fronts to create a strong, mass-based movement which could reunite the country. As Skocpol notes, the alliance accomplished three crucial goals (1979:243): it established a centralized Nationalist Government, centred in Canton; it created an effective Nationalist Revolutionary Army for the Northern Expedition; and it organized a broad-based, reform-oriented party.

The effect of the latter objective for women was to broaden the scope of political activity. The Women's Department of the CCP was dissolved and their work was incorporated into a women's bureau within the GMD (Leith, 1973:51). The bulk of their activity was directed at formulating resolutions regarding equal rights for women and increasing membership of women in women's associations. During this period of alliance, the CCP leadership began to reconsider their own position regarding the mobilization of women. It is clear that women and labour remained the key organizational link. On 'Resolutions on the Women's Movement', for example, endorsed by the Central Committee of the CCP in July, 1926, the Party argued:

We must realize that the labour movement is the essence, and women students a tool, of the women's movement. If we fail to achieve results among these two groups, it is senseless to speak of all other women's movements (Wilbur and How, 1956:309).

Nevertheless, the CCP also maintained that creating a large united front was crucial. In order to accomplish this, they proposed a broadening of their appeals to women of all classes, attention to forging links with peasant women, popularizing the literature aimed at women and training more cadres for work on women's issues (Wilbur and How, 1956:308-310).

Following the breakup of the alliance between the GMD and CCP in 1927, and the violent purge of Communists undertaken by the right wing of the GMD, the CCP was forced to reconsider its urban-focused political strategy. The right wing forces, led by Chiang Kai-shek, had effectively consolidated control of the urban sector with the support of both the Chinese bourgeoisie and the Nationalist

Revolutionary Army.¹¹ The turn toward a peasant-based revolutionary strategy was not without resistance, both from Moscow and from cadres within the CCP who favoured a focus on recapturing urban bases. It was only after the continued defeat of sporadic uprisings, and the massacre of thousands of Party members, that the strategy of peasant warfare became an expedient alternative.¹²

The impact of the general shift toward mobilization of the peasantry on the specific situation of women was felt on several levels. First, the conservatism of the peasantry (outsiders to the liberal influence of the May Fourth Movement) became a factor of resistance in attempts to introduce reform of the Confucian family system, which was still strongly entrenched in rural areas. Johnson (1976) and Stacey (1979) have both argued convincingly that the CCP's loss in 1927 of an urban base for revolution, also meant the loss of a strong base for a feminist movement within the Party.

It should likewise be noted that when the CCP was forced to abandon the cities, it lost its accountability to urban feminism as well. Because cities had been the sites of attacks upon Confucian patriarchy, this variety of family crisis lost its opportunity to play a decisive role in the revolutionary drama that lay ahead (Stacey, 1979:156).

¹¹ A prolonged discussion of the reorientation of the GMD under Chiang and its period of rule until the second United Front is beyond the scope of this chapter. Useful sources on this period are Eastman, 1974; Tien, 1972; Cavendish, 1969 and Chesneaux et al., 1977: chapters 6 and 7. A discussion of the role of women under GMD rule can be found in Croll, 1978: Chapter 6, and Stacey, 1979:277-87.

¹² See Houn, 1973 (Chapter III).

Second, the structural subordination of women's unions in rural areas to peasant associations, which were controlled by males, often led to a dilution of feminist demand (Johnson, 1976:36). Finally, the requirements of mass mobilization, both during the Sino-Japanese war and the confrontation with the Nationalist forces, led to a particular context of demand for female labour (Davin, 1976:21-52). The policies regarding marriage, land and labour reform which developed in this context, can be seen as strategic responses to the exigencies of revolutionary insurgency in a traditional, peasant-based context. The stage was set for the subordination of feminist demands to the more important struggles outlined by the Party. In his 1927 report on the peasant movement in the province of Hunan, for example, Mao made explicit reference to the ordering of political priorities. Strategically, he argued, the feudal control of the landlords was the primary contradiction among the peasantry.¹³

¹³ It is perhaps useful to compare this officially-released translation of Mao's work with the version offered by Stuart Schram (1969:259). Basing his translation on the original Chinese documents, Schram cites the same passage in the following manner: Hence, our task at present is to guide the peasants to wage political struggles with their utmost strength so that the authority of the landlords will be thoroughly uprooted. An economic struggle should also be started immediately, so that the economic problems of the poor peasants can be completely solved. The abolition of the clan system, of superstitions, and of one-sided notions of chastity will follow as a natural consequence of victory in the political and economic struggles.

Thus the only significant "reconstructions" which appeared in the later official translation were the introduction of the "land problem" as a specific concern, and the substitution of "abolition. . . of chastity" with "inequality between men and women."

Therefore, our present task is to lead the peasant to put their greatest efforts into the political struggle, so that the landlords' authority is entirely overthrown. The economic struggle should follow immediately, so that the land problem and the other economic problems of the poor peasants may be fundamentally solved. As for the clan system, superstition, and inequality between men and women, their abolition will follow as a natural consequence of victory in the political and economic struggles (Mao, 1965, vol. 1:46; emphasis added).

This emphasis on political and economic struggles as primary in revolutionary activity to the more secondary issues of clan, religion and sex, is a key factor in explaining the forms of intervention the CCP proposed in both the early soviets of the Jiangxi period and the bases in Yanan during the civil war period.¹⁴

The early collectivist soviets, established as rural bases in central and southeast China, were important as a 'testing ground' for the implementation of CCP policies regarding women; policies later expanded in the Liberated Areas of the north following the Long March of 1934/35. Between 1929 and 1934, following their retreat from a base in Jinggangshan on the border of Hunan and Jiangxi, the remnants of the Party established themselves in the border regions of Jiangxi, Fujian and Guangdong. Offering the advantages of geographical inaccessibility to Chiang's forces, and economic independence from large urban centres, these bases proved valuable in the attempt to establish autonomous districts under CCP administration. The most

¹⁴ Three excellent summaries of pre-revolutionary policies toward women are available in the secondary literature. They are Davin (1976), Johnson (1977), and Stacey (1979). Also useful for a general description of conditions in the 'red bases' is Chapter 7 of Croll (1978).

important of these bases was the Jiangxi Central Soviet, the birthplace of the Chinese Soviet Republic on November 7th, 1931.

What quickly becomes clear in the historical research on the Jiangxi period is that the CCP found itself caught between the ideological commitment to the full emancipation of women which had been present since the founding of the movement, and a strategic necessity to secure the loyalty and commitment of a traditional peasantry, well-steeped in Confucian conceptions of "woman's place." The result was strategic compromise in the domain of policy, particularly that concerning marriage reform.¹⁵

Two key policies of the Jiangxi Soviet are the Marriage Regulations of 1931 and the Marriage Law of 1934.¹⁶ Both policies contained an emphasis on:

- a) freedom of choice in marriage by individuals involved;
- b) freedom of choice in divorce by individuals involved;
- c) registration of marriage and divorce with local party officials, and
- d) responsibility of the male in divorce action to provide for wife

¹⁵ I have elaborated this discussion of the strategic consequences of particular social policies for revolutionary mobilization in a traditional society, elsewhere (Saunders, 1979). The argument posed in that paper is essentially that one 'makes sense' of radical reform by understanding it in the context of the imperatives of insurgency. Extending an analysis by G. Massell (1974) of Soviet Central Asia, I argued that the role of women in the 'institutions of traditionalism' is an important factor in the formulation of revolutionary policy regarding women. To mobilize women in this context accomplished two goals; it released women from oppressive relations and it undercut traditional patterns of authority.

¹⁶ English translations are available in Meijer (1971).

and any children (the latter remaining in custody of the wife).

The compromise is evident in two senses; first, there was consistent failure to implement the new regulations and second, there was a retrenchment on one significant clause, Article 11, in the 1934 Marriage Law. The first problem stems partially from an insufficient number of trained cadres to carry out these reforms while mobilizing for guerrilla warfare and implementing the Party's land reform legislation. It is also directly related, however, to the CCP's very real fear of antagonizing the male peasantry, whose labour was required for the war effort. In the Party's 'Plan for Work Among the Women' released in March 1931, for example, they expressed concern over possible 'abuses' of marriage reform:

. . . we must resolutely oppose the idea of absolute freedom of marriage as it creates chaotic conditions in society and antagonizes the peasants and the Red Army. We must make it clear that the Central Committee never maintained absolute freedom of divorce either, because that would be an anarchistic practice. . . (quoted in Meijer, 1971:39).

This concern was also later reflected in the qualifications introduced in the revised 1934 Marriage Law, particularly in Article 11. While there was some retreat on the 'support' regulations, the most significant retrenchment concerned divorce restrictions for the wives of men in the Red Army. By making army men virtually exempt from divorce by their wives (unless the former gave consent), the CCP was effectively able to both quell dissent for that crucial sector and retain the advantages marriage reform offered the Party. This factor speaks to the strategic significance of legislation which served to undermine traditional authority patterns vested

in the clan kinship system, and transfer the focus of 'approval' for marriage and divorce to the CCP. Thus, the subordination of clan authority to Party control was really a blow against feudal power structures as well. In this manner, radical reform in marriage custom provided important leverage for the CCP in breaking clan ties; ties which often encompassed entire villages. In addition, the new accessibility of poor male peasants to a marriage based on choice, rather than ability to afford the brideprice, encouraged the loyalty of this group to the CCP.¹⁷

The attempt to maintain a strategic balance between marriage reform and potential divisiveness is also reflected in what the regulation did not contain. An important aspect of the CCP's policy is its inattention to the subject of the marriage relationship and the authority of a husband over his wife.

The matrimonial property regime was not a subject that came within the sphere of regulation. The point of view seems to be that for an ordered society it would be necessary to regulate the conditions for marriage, but that the internal relationships between husband and wife should be left for the parties themselves to arrange (Meijer, 1978:442).

As a result there was no basis in the policies on marriage reform to question the exercise of authority by a husband within the marriage relationship.

¹⁷ Although statistics regarding marriage and divorce in Jiangxi are very fragmentary, there is some indication that a sizeable number of people took advantage of the new regulations in the beginning. Hu (1974), for example, cites figures for two counties in the northeast zone of Jiangxi which point to a total of 3,793 marriages and 4,274 divorces in a four-month period in 1932. By way of comparison he notes that during the entire year of 1930, only 62 divorces took place in Beijing and 853 in Shanghai (1974:486).

Analysis of other significant policies during the Jiangxi period reveal additional problems for women which resulted from the approach taken by the CCP. The Land Laws, for example, formulated between 1928 and 1931 reiterated one important theme: the equal rights of all individuals to land allotments.¹⁸ The impact of this approach is clear in one respect; redistribution of land on an individual, rather than a family unit basis broke the village network at its base. It did so by undermining the crucial link between property and kinship, forging a new link between the individual and the Party.

It is also evident that the right of equal access to land gave many women an opportunity for economic independence which was impossible prior to land reform. But as Davin notes, another consistent theme in the Land Laws of this period is the priority given to class position over gender in assigning allotments:¹⁹

Though the patriarchal family was held to oppress all women, the women of the exploiting classes could not thereby be considered a part of the exploited masses: the rich peasant's wife was not held to be landless just because she had never held title deeds (Davin, 1976:27).

As a consequence, the traditional exclusion of women from property rights within the feudal marriage relationship was ignored by the CCP in the process of determining class position and access to land.

¹⁸ English translations of these documents are available in Hsiao (1969).

¹⁹ The various criteria used by local officials to determine eligibility and the procedures for assignment are available in Hsiao, 1969:257-281.

The organization of women's associations further reflects the political subordination of feminist priorities in Jiangxi. This subordination occurred on two levels: structurally, women's associations were reorganized as sub-committees of district, township and village peasant associations;²⁰ and strategically, the activity of these groups was directed more towards the mobilization of women for defence against the Nationalist forces. The number of women involved in these organizations is uncertain because it appears that often a women's association existed in name only in certain communities (Davin, 1976:24). The type of work they engaged in is clearer from surviving documents; essentially they organized women for 'rear area' support services (such as transporting supplies and nursing the wounded) and for taking the place of male labour lost to military services (Johnson, 1976:43-47). Also, as Stacey has noted, members of women's organizations were regularly encouraged to persuade their husbands and sons to enlist in the Red Army (1979:219). In contributions other than agricultural labour, their tasks were consistently of a domestic nature. The subordination of 'feminist' issues such as literacy, health care, footbinding and feudal marriage customs to the pursuit of strategic priorities is evident in the major subjects of debate of the 1933 Women's District Congresses: enlarging and giving support to the Red Army, caring for dependents of the latter, learning to plough, and selling personal valuables to finance the civil war effort (Davin, 1976:26).

²⁰ A description of the peasant association hierarchy can be found in Party documents of 1931, reprinted in Hsiao, 1969: 175-179.

The intensification of pressure from Chiang's forces in the early 1930's, the increasing divisiveness within the CCP over proper political strategy and the deterioration of their relationship with the peasantry in particular bases, combined to weaken the position of the Party in Jiangxi (Chesneaux et al., 1977:232-36). The culmination of this process was Chiang's fifth 'encirclement' campaign which forced the CCP to abandon its bases in South China in August, 1934 and retreat during the arduous Long March to border region bases in Northwest China.²¹ The arrival of the Red Army contingents in Shenxi in the fall of 1935 added significantly to the existing communist movement in that region,²² and marked a turning point in the revolutionary movement. Entrenched in the Yanan base in Shenxi, the Chinese Communists were able to take advantage of the threat of a Japanese invasion by calling for a united struggle of all political parties. By establishing the anti-Japanese struggle as the 'primary contradiction', the CCP secured a period of stability with the Guomindang; a period which allowed the Party to cement its relationship to the peasantry and rebuild its tattered forces. In addition, the nationalistic basis of the appeal for a United Front won them considerable support among the educated urban elite. The Second United Front was officially established in early 1937,

²¹ It has been estimated that of the 50,000 who took part in the Long March, only 50 were women (Salaff and Merkle, 1970:182).

²² For a discussion of the Long March see Wilson (1973). A very informative discussion of the early years in Shenxi, prior to the arrival of southern forces, is available in Seldon (1979:Chapters I and II).

following the 'arrest' of Tchiang in Xian and the forced compliance of the central government. The alliance proved advantageous to the growth of the Chinese Communist movement, yet harmful for the place of feminism within that movement.

The immediate effects of the alliance with the GMD were the cessation of internal armed conflict, the termination of land reform on a wide scale, and the creation of the 'red bases' as separate democratic regions within the Republic of China. The long-term consequences for women were the development of increasingly conservative policies regarding marriage and the family and an intensive campaign to mobilize under-used female labour power. Again, as with Jiangxi policies, these developments can be understood as strategic responses to a particular type of larger crisis: the context of both an uneasy collaboration with the bourgeois central government, and military mobilization against the Japanese. This is not to suggest that the CCP abandoned its long term goal of establishing a communist regime in China; certainly political activity continued among the peasantry in particular. What is suggested, however, is that the politicization of women was actively restrained by the CCP because the issue was seen as subordinate, and at time contradictory to the struggle at hand.

Evidence of a retrenchment on feminist issues by the party is found in analyses of the marriage laws promulgated by the CCP Border Area administrations during the United Front. The Marriage Regulations of the Border Area of Shenxi, Gansu and Ningxia in April, 1939, for example, indicate a definite shift in direction away from

the principles of freedom of marriage and freedom of divorce.²³ The latter terms do not even appear in the new regulations. Moreover, for the first time, the CCP established 'grounds' for divorce, thereby introducing restrictions to the process not present in the Jiangxi legislation. As Meijer has noted, particular chapters of the Regulations bear a remarkable resemblance to sections of the National Government's Civil Code, in addition to an overall absence of any reference to the 'feudal' marriage system (Meijer, 1971:62-63). The intention behind these new Regulations was apparently to introduce a marriage system in the Border Areas that did not antagonize the local population; a population more traditional than in Jiangxi. At the same time, however, there was a definite attempt to 'democratize' the entrenched family system. This dual approach is explicitly stated in Article I of the 1939 Regulations:

These regulations have been drawn up fundamentally in the spirit of democracy and take account of the circumstances prevailing in the Border Area of Shensi, Kanus, and Ninghsia (quoted in Meijer, 1971:285).

The pragmatism inherent in this consideration of "circumstances prevailing" was, nevertheless, coupled with a more democratic conception of the family. This was part of a larger wartime policy program, labeled the New Democracy, initiated by the CCP, and Mao Zedong in particular, in the spring of 1937.²⁴ The program itself was a response to the problems of stabilization and

²³ Translated versions of this and other marriage laws, during the United Front, are available in Meijer (1971:285-299).

²⁴ For Mao's well known discussion of this approach, see his 'On New Democracy' (Mao, 1954: volume 3, pg. 106-56).

consolidation which the Party sought to resolve during the United Front period. Essentially, it involved an attempt to put in place social and political institutions which would provide a basis upon which the CCP leadership could build their model society (see Selden, 1971:121-136). The goal of policies concerning the family institution, therefore was not to destroy the family so much as to create a new and strengthened family system.²⁵ As noted in a 1941 Party directive:

Our Marriage Regulations are thoroughly permeated by the spirit of a new democratic, dignified family system (quoted in Meijer, 1971:58).

However, this new family system retained the family household, a unit central to peasant farm production in the traditional context of rural China. If we compare Judith Stacey's analysis (1979) of land reform in this period, to the above discussion on family and marriage reform, the aims of the CCP became more evident.

The abandoning of radical land redistribution was followed by more moderate reform policies on rent, interest and tax reductions for peasant households. The latter facilitated the growth of independent family farm production, which in turn was crucial to the provision of resources for the red armies in their anti-Japanese campaigns. According to Stacey:

Promoting the health of the traditional family was one of those causes in which peasant and Party fortunes were inter-dependent. Economic self-sufficiency of the base areas

²⁵ Other articles in the various marriage codes, implemented in different localities, dealt with matters such as registration of betrothals, marriage ceremonies and the discretion of local authorities in registering marriages and/or divorces.

was a crucial war-time objective, and the agrarian reform measures of the period largely succeeded in achieving it (1979:184).

This emphasis on 'economic self-sufficiency' was also a primary factor in efforts to mobilize women for production in the base areas. The motivation behind the call for a more efficient use of female labour power was to develop a sound economic base in the border regions, and at the same time, to increase resources for the war effort. In 1938, for example, the leading mass organizations, including the Women's Association with a membership of 173,000, were brought together under the Rear Area Enemy Resistance Association (Selden, 1971:142). The major activities of this organization were directed at military support and mobilization. Women were mobilized for textile and food production tasks, in addition to replacing male labour in particular agricultural processes. For the most part, attempts to mobilize women were based upon traditional sex-typed skills and labour which could be organized in the household (see Johnson, 1976:65). The focus on organizing women for production tasks intensified throughout the early 40's and any attention to other aspects of women's status gradually disappeared from CCP policy documents.

The increasing focus on women and production developed in tandem with a deterioration in the economic and political situation in the red bases. The devastating Japanese offensives against communist bases in North China in 1941 and 1942 had decreased the population from 44 million to 25 million. In addition the Guomindang, increasingly threatened by Chinese Communist expansion,

had imposed a severe economic blockade in 1941, surrounding and effectively isolating the Shenxi-Gansu-Ningxia region (Selden, 1971:177-180). The immediate consequence was an intensive campaign for increased production of necessary goods, carried out largely through the establishment of decentralized industrial co-operatives and craft workshops (Chesneaux et al., 1977:299-301). In the area of textile production, for example, the goals of centralized planning and decentralized production are evident. Faced with textile shortages as a result of the blockade, the Party encouraged the expansion of household cloth production, with the result that between 1942 and 1943 the number of women involved in the textile home industry increased from 13,500 to 41,540 (Selden, 1971:258).

The orientation of the CCP toward women in this period is most clearly reflected in a policy statement by the Central Committee issued in February, 1943.²⁶ In that document, the leadership of the CCP expressed both a concern with reforms not directly related to mobilizing women for work, and a clear articulation of the belief that liberation for women was tied to their participation in production. The latter assumption, reflecting a major principle of the classical Marxist argument,²⁷ forms the basis of the Central Committee's drive to focus exclusively on organizing women for production:

As victory draws daily nearer and things get daily tougher in all the anti-Japanese bases, we are faced with three

²⁶ A translation of this directive is available in Appendix I of Davin (1976).

²⁷ See discussion in Chapter II, section C of this dissertation.

necessary tasks: fighting, production, and education. Of these tasks, it is production at which women can and should particularly excel, and their part in it is as glorious a struggle as that of the soldiers at the front. Moreover, progress towards women's liberation through an amelioration in their educational level, their political position, and their living standards will arise from their economic independence and prosperity. . . . Not only will this play a big part in building up the economy of the bases areas, it will give women the material conditions which will enable them gradually to escape from feudal oppression (Translated in Davin, 1976:198-99).

The directive goes on to outline the types of "women's work" the local cadres should be engaged in.²⁸ Women's organizations were encouraged to organize production co-operatives in the villages: these would become the primary associations, rather than political ones, for peasant women. The mobilization of women for political and educational meetings was actively discouraged because it took away time and energy from material production. Certain feminist reform activities were allowed to continue--specifically those addressing the health of women as workers. Article V of the directive states:

In matters which affect women's health and are thus detrimental to production, such as foot-binding, or inattention to hygiene, women should be encouraged to carry out reform (Translated in Davin, 1976:200).

The importance of this particular document, for the cause of women in revolutionary movement, is not that the CCP attempted to 'put aside' certain issues (such as a continued attack on feudal

²⁸ There is some disagreement over the translation of the Chinese term "funu gongzuo." Davin (1976:17 cf) prefers the term "women-work" to convey the wide range of activities among women the CCP was engaged in. Given that these 'chores' usually fell to female cadres, I find "women's work" equally acceptable.

marriages, a campaign to increase literacy among women, an attempt to involve women in political representation, etc.) because of the pending military and economic crises. Rather, this 1934 directive represents what was a fundamental shift in Chinese Communist politics from the more radical Jiangxi period to a more conservative orientation to feminist issues. As Kay Johnson (1976) has observed, the burden for progress came to rest on the shoulders of women; the more fully they participated in production, the more quickly feudal ideas would disappear. More importantly, this focus on liberation through production became an integral part of all subsequent policy directives (Johnson, 1976:71). The 1943 directive thus stands as an important benchmark in the Party's conceptualization of strategies for liberating women; a conceptualization that had gradually emerged during the exigencies of the war with Japan.

The narrowed focus of women's work did not emerge without resistance on the part of some feminists within the CCP. Those who protested, like Ding Ling in her now-famous criticism of Party demands on women, were accused of subverting the revolutionary cause or falling victim to bourgeois ideas.²⁹ The position of the CCP at this time, according to arguments made to Ding Ling, was that sex equality had already been established in Yanan and further activism

²⁹ Ding Ling's 1942 essay, entitled "Thoughts on March 8" and published in Yanan's Liberation Daily, criticized the double demands on women to be workers in both the home and the labour force, without adequate support systems. A translation of her essay is available in Benton (1975). Following public criticism and political 'demotion', she recanted her argument in June, 1942.

for women's rights would only threaten the gains made by women (see Stein, 1945:251-59). The strict enforcement of the 'Party line' during this period was not unique to feminist causes; it was part of a larger campaign, the rectification movement (zhengfeng) of 1942-44, in which the CCP attempted to eliminate both dogmatism and elitism, and ideologically unite the revolutionary movement along Marxist-Leninist principles.³⁰ In this political climate, most feminist reforms were considered to be Western-inspired, elitist proposals which threatened the unity of the party with the peasant masses.

The surrender of Japan in August, 1945 refocused the attention of the Chinese Communists on their relationship to the Nationalist Government. Following several futile attempts to establish a coalition government composed of Communist, Guomindang and centrist political elements, civil war began again in earnest in the spring of 1946.³¹ The military gains of the CCP during the war against Japan had resulted in their control of 19 liberated areas by 1945, with a standing army of almost one million men (Chesneaux et al., 1977:306). This, combined with their effectiveness in organizationally penetrating the peasantry, set the stage for a strong counter-offensive against Nationalist forces. At the same time, the requisites of stability and retrenchment on radical policies enforced during the alliance were now removed. An uneasy

³⁰ Useful background sources for this campaign are Selden (1971:188-207) and Compton (1966).

³¹ Secondary sources which are informative for the civil war period are Barnett (1963), Hinton (1966), Melby (1968), and Crook and Crook (1959).

co-existence was replaced by full-scale mobilization of forces on both sides.

A significant policy change introduced by the Communists during the civil war was the re-introduction of radical land reform in the Liberated Areas. Landlords were publicly denounced, land was confiscated and redistributed to poor and 'middle' peasants, and heavy taxes were levied against landlords and rich peasants.³² In mobilizing the peasantry against the entrenched power structures of agrarian society, the CCP accomplished two aims. On the one hand, the peasants gained access to land which allowed the revitalization of agricultural productivity; on the other hand, the Party gained a crucial ally, one whose economic and military support served to politically isolate the Guomindang. Peasant radicalism, while orchestrated and channelled by the CCP, was fueled by the bitterness accumulated over generations of economic exclusion. Consequently, when "unleashed" this bitterness proved to be a powerful force in uprooting traditional elite structures in rural China.³³

What happened in North China between 1946 and 1949 was a unique synthesis between the military needs of the Chinese Communists and the social revolutionary potential of the Chinese peasantry. . . the peasants as a class were provided with an organizational autonomy and solidarity that they had not enjoyed within the traditional agrarian sociopolitical structure. Once the peasants acquired these means to become

³² See Appendix A and Appendix B of Hinton (1966) for the full text of the Chinese Agrarian Law of 1947, and regulations concerning its implementation, respectively. Also, see Mao's "Essential Points in Land Reform in the New Liberated Areas" (1954, vol. 5:201-2).

³³ Often peasant 'enthusiasm' for radical land reform became a problem for the CCP, who at times were unable to keep the peasants in check. See Mao's "Correct the Left Errors in Land Reform Propaganda" (1954, vol. 5:197-200).

(within the villages) a class for themselves, they could and did strike out against the landlord. . . (Skocpol, 1979:262).

It is possible to argue that a similar "synthesis" developed between Party exigencies and feminist issues during the civil war. In the same context that agrarian radicalism served to uproot traditional authority structures, a revitalized feminist activism also undermined the hegemony of feudal institutions. In fact, the 'radicalism' of land reform and feminist family reforms in this period are closely interrelated. Stacey, for example, has argued:

. . . the history of land reform and family reform in China were thoroughly intertwined. Although family struggles were never allowed to jeopardize the success of land reform, the two policies had important aims in common. Patriarchal authority buttressed the class structure as well as the power of men over women. Land reform and family reform were complementary efforts to eliminate the sources of authority for traditional rural elites (1979:252).

The importance of a radical policy of land reform for the family unit (and women's role with it) was two-fold. First, its directives explicitly supported family-based agricultural production and the peasant household as the primary unit of production.³⁴ Second the attention to, and involvement of, women in the land reform movement served to mobilize women politically and economically. The involvement of the Women's Association, for example, in land redistribution brought more women into the political arena. Mass meetings were held to determine access to land and treatment of

³⁴ Stacey cites as evidence of this, tax policies, based on the household as the primary taxable unit; class assignation policies, based on family status rather than individual; and land consolidation measures which attempted to overcome fragmentation of allotments to individual household members (1979:194-202).

former landlords; in areas where men were away in the military, women were the major participating force (Davín, 1976:46-47). Economically, women took an active interest in land reform, given its potential for assuring increased independence. As a leader of the Women's Association in Long Bow village in 1948 told William Hinton:

We have to struggle for a long time to win equality. When we have land of our own it will help a lot. In the past men always said, 'You depend on me for living. You just stay home and eat the things I earn.' But after women get their share they can say, 'I got this grain from my own land and I can live without you by my own labour' (Hinton, 1966:159-60).

In principle, land reform also meant divorce was more feasible given the legal right of the wife to her own allotment. In practice, it is less clear whether her right was always guaranteed in property arrangements following divorce action. Meijer, for example, notes the reluctance of officials in this period to allow a women to take any property with her after divorce--including movable property (1971:234). Nevertheless, the political significance of individual land titles (which were explicitly provided for women) should not be underestimated. It did add a new dimension of power to the female role in the household in that it created the possibility for withdrawal of economic resources from the family unit. To the extent that this undercut village organization and control in rural China, it is a significant factor in coming to terms with CCP political strategy.

An explicit reorientation on 'women's work' was expressed in

a policy document released by the Central Committee in 1948.³⁵ While retaining an emphasis on productive labour as the core to mobilizing activity, the CC also indicated that participation in production, in itself, was not sufficient to effectively remove sex subordination. Rather, they argued, women have special 'interests' and problems which require direct attention and action.

Step by step we must purposefully eliminate the feudal thought, constraints, and customs which prevent women's participation in political, cultural, and economic activities (of which the most important is production). It should not be thought that once women take part in production all the remnants of feudalism in society which constrain them will just naturally disappear and there will be no need to do any more work. This way of letting things drift ignores the special interests of women and is erroneous (Translated in Davin, 1976:205).

The directive called for an intensive campaign of re-education to eliminate 'feudal' attitudes and customs towards women. There was also a recognition that legislative mechanisms must be used to abolish such practices as female infanticide, bride-price and footbinding where they continued. At the same time, however, there was an explicitly stated concern to avoid "alienating" the masses or causing "internal antagonisms" among the peasantry. Thus, while recognizing specific features of subordination which required attention, the CC maintained as primary the class struggle, the civil war and the unity of the peasantry.

But it must be understood that this sort of struggle is an ideological struggle amongst the peasants and should be radically different from the class struggle against feudal

³⁵ See "Decisions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on woman-work at present in the countryside of the liberated areas (1948)." It is translated into English in Appendix 2 of Davin (1976).

landlords. Moreover, the purpose of this type of struggle is to educate all the peasants more effectively and to help to mobilize women to engage in production and other constructive enterprises and to build a truly democratic and harmonious family. It should also strengthen and further consolidate the unity between the peasants (Translated in Davin, 1976:205).

The assumption that the elimination of patriarchy is an ideological struggle, in the context of a larger class struggle over material resources, is a crucial factor in locating the Party's conception of feminism. Once the forces of production were 'liberated' and women were mobilized for social labour, sex inequality was then reduced to an ideological question. This had significant implications for the organization of labour once women entered production. The mode of organization of female labour was not contingent on reducing a sex division of labour; quite the opposite, it reinforced sex-divided tasks. According to the directive, consideration should be given, when assigning female labour to government planning requirements, the amount of male labour available, and "what women customarily produce" (Translated in Davin, 1976:204). Moreover, the organization of female production was such that women's responsibility for domestic labour in the family persisted. Arrangements such as home production teams, production cooperatives organized on an inter-household basis, and mutual-aid groups for child care ensured both the involvement of women in production and a continued maintenance of the family unit.

The importance of this 1948 policy statement is in its clarification of the CCP vision regarding what constitutes subordination of women and what alleviates it. In so doing there is

a clear attachment to the Marxian/Engelsian approach outlined earlier in this thesis. The problem for women was separation from production-both in terms of access to land and participation in social labour. The question of domestic labour was addressed in terms of how it could be managed collectively by women. Nowhere is there a consideration of the value attached to the kinds of labour women were expected to engage in, or of the implications of sex-specific production tasks. The "secondary" issues in sex subordination (political rights, marriage practices, educational access, etc.) were defined as ideological problems, thus requiring strategies directed at changing attitudes and ideas in society.

The visibility of women's organizations increased considerably during the Civil War period. In part, this was a consequence of the involvement of the Women's Association in land reform which we noted earlier. But it also stemmed from the attention given to independent women's organizations in the 1948 directive of the CC. The latter explicitly criticized earlier actions by Party cadres which eliminated such organizations or made them too dependent on Party instruction. In response, the CC called for the education and mobilization of women through a reliance on various organizational forms such as production teams, literacy classes and mutual aid groups. In addition, they called for the establishment of women's 'congresses' at both village and county levels. The intention was to create a mass-based organ which would facilitate communication and policy action between the CCP and the female masses.

One impressive result of these guidelines was the increased membership in the various women's organizations. Between 1943 and 1949, it increased from 1.5 million to over 22 million (Maloney, 1980:170). The refinement of 'mass tactics,' originally developed in the early forties in Yanan, provided a framework for incorporating women into politics. Illustrative of this approach are the 'speak bitterness' sessions which were organized generally by the local Woman's Association.³⁶ These mass meetings allowed women to speak publicly, often for the first time, about their suffering (it was not only landlords and husbands who were targeted for blame, but also mothers-in-law). They also often served an important function as mass political 'tribunals,' wherein guilt or innocence was publicly assessed and appropriate sanctions imposed. The more direct political involvement of women also improved in this period. By 1949, on the eve of the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, women constituted 30 percent of elected village representatives, 20 percent of district cadres and 10 percent of county cadres (Davin, 1976:52).

C. Conclusion

It is possible, at this point, to suggest several analytical themes which are present in the literature on this period. While the above historical sketch is admittedly very broad, the intention was merely to offer in summary fashion a view of the significant patterns

³⁶ See W. Hinton (1966) for particularly vivid accounts of this process in Long Bow village.

of historical events, and the relation of women to these events. Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis.

First, there is no question that the Chinese Communist Party had a strong symbolic and ideological commitment to improving the situation of women; this was present even in the earliest stages of Party policy formulation. That commitment had roots in both the liberal, nationalist May Fourth Movement and in international socialist doctrine. The latter, specifically in Marxian and Engelsian literature, had significant implications for 'framing' the women's problem in China. It essentially established a primary relationship between participation in social production and female emancipation, within the larger context of class struggle over productive resources. Patriarchy, as a relation of power, was seen to reside within the feudal family. Thus, the elimination of feudal social relations in the course of revolution would necessarily remove the material and social conditions for the existence of patriarchy. When obvious patriarchal practices persisted, they could be dealt with in the context of 'cultural lag' argument. It was not that the conditions of patriarchy were being reproduced, it was argued; rather, some habits and attitudes took longer to disappear than others.

A second significant factor is the shifting emphasis on improving female status through the pre-revolutionary periods. The reasons behind this fluctuating approach are tied to the varying historical circumstances of the CCP. During periods of military mobilization, whether it was guerrilla activity or full-scale

warfare, the drain of male labour away from productive activities demanded the economic mobilization of women. During periods of nationalist alliances, however, economic mobilization was not accompanied by concerted campaigns into other aspects of subordination. The requirements of class co-operation and national stability led to retrenchment in both radical land-distribution policies and radical marriage and family policies. Central to economic and political stability was the preservation of the household unit; only under periods of intentional socio-political upheaval did the family unit, and the female role within it, become a focus of radical policy. It was suggested in the above discussion that the reasons for this lie more with the need to uproot traditional feudal structures in a period of insurgency than with the political commitment of the CCP to feminist reform. This is not to deny the very real presence of the latter; it merely suggests that economic and military priorities shaped the conditions under which women's roles could or could not be expanded.

Third, the impact of traditionalism in the domain of female roles is important to understand, particularly given the role of the peasantry in the CCP political strategy. The Party was, as suggested earlier in the chapter, caught between an ideological commitment to feminist-based reforms and a strategic reliance on a conservatively-oriented peasantry (especially male peasants for military manpower). In certain policy areas the interests arising from each sphere coincided; in land reform, for example, allotments to women served to increase the overall household share. On other issues, however,

the interests of each were in opposition. While freedom of marriage increased the access of poor male peasants to marriage, the attendant freedom of divorce regulations severely undercut the stability of the peasant household unit, both in terms of its material resources and its entrenched lines of authority. Thus, the Chinese Communists were forced to walk a fine line between implementing social and economic reform, and avoiding the alienation of an essential ally. In periods of compromise, the solution was both to pull back on radical family policies and structurally subordinate women's organizations to 'umbrella' organizations of workers and peasants.

Finally, and related to the above, the changes introduced by the CCP to the labour roles of women are significant in that they both challenged traditional assumptions of female labour and reinforced traditional sex divisions in labour tasks. The CCP challenged traditional attitudes and customs by making the economic mobilization of women a central point of their revolutionary strategy. As a consequence the numerical participation of women in social production rose dramatically throughout the pre-liberation years. This participation was predicated on a high demand for labour--particularly in labour-intensive production such as agriculture--in the context of a military-mobilized society. At the same time, however, the context in which women entered production, and the degree of control they exercised over the production process, reflected traditional assumptions and practices. The implications of sex-divided labour were not addressed; it was assumed that participation would be built around tasks customarily associated with

women (handicraft and textile production, for example). Furthermore, the utilization of female labour was accompanied by attempts to maintain the independent household unit, sustained by the labour of women. This was reflected both in the inattention in policy to the organization of necessary labour in the family, and in strategies directed at organizing women's social production around the family unit, through such things as home co-operative industries and mutual aid production teams.

The critical point in this historical review of the pre-liberation context, is not whether the CCP did or did not "emancipate" women; such a question cannot not be posed in absolute terms. Rather the focus has been on: 1) what the social sex structure 'looked like' in the early part of this century; 2) how the Chinese Communists came to understand and respond to that structure in policy reforms; and 3) the particular historical material conditions under which these policies emerged. I have argued that the lack of uniformity in the Party's attacks on sex subordination must be understood in terms of both the particular social, political and economic crises faced in different periods, and of the limited analytical assumptions reflecting classical Marxist analyses of sex subordination.

I now turn to an examination of the nature of Party response under differing historical material conditions. With the official pronouncement of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the CCP was transformed from a 'party of revolution' to an established state authority. The extent to which the priorities of

the new state intersected with the elimination of sex subordination must first be investigated by examining the economic imperatives faced by the new regime.

CHAPTER VI

BEGINNING STEPS: RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION 1949-1952

A. Introduction: Analyzing the State in Post-Revolutionary China

In historical treatments of post-liberation China, there is a common tendency to portray its development in terms of competing 'models'.¹ As Andrew Nathan (1976) has noted, this is usually expressed as policy oscillations between left and right leadership factions, and generally assumes that there is a unity and consistency to policies emanating from each faction. As a result, one is forced into analyzing socialist development in China in the context of opposing political paradigms, each of which is assumed to be linked to a wide range of economic policies. Although, in the following chapters, I discuss competing approaches to economic development, the latter should be viewed more in terms of patterns in policy formation and implementation which reflect or are accompanied by political struggles, and less in terms of internally consistent and monolithic models which are 'imposed' on history. I use the term model in the ensuing chapters more in hindsight of these differing patterns than to reflect a rigid conception of opposing models of development. For similar reasons, Jan Prybyla also rejects a simplistic notion of

¹ See, for example; Chen and Galenson (1969) on the Soviet, Indian and Balanced Growth models in China; Andors (1977) on Soviet and Shanghai models; and Gray (1973) on Maoist and Liuist models.

model:

What this adds up to is a series of social experiments tending in a certain direction and geared to a few broad and general beliefs concerning what its holders think is the best possible society. It is not a set of rigid recipes for strategy and tactics laid down once and for all, and followed unswervingly by all concerned (1970:1-2) .

Likewise, the use of labels such as rightist and/or leftist policies can often be misleading in its premise of polarization. While it is useful to recognize significant shifts in political leadership circles, it is at the same time naive historically to portray political struggles as being simply a case of the right versus the left. Such arguments mask the area of overlap between right and left 'lines',² and substitute ideological explanations for materialist analyses of the circumstances underlying the shifts. In the following discussion, I am interested in examining the nature of the material conditions and specific crises in each historical period, and of the response made by the state leadership at that time. In doing so, I focus on actual strategies and interventions by the state as an agent of historical action rather than on political and ideological struggles.³

This is not to suggest that policies on development and growth emerged in a political vacuum; certainly it is possible to

² Nathan, for example, notes that both left and right lines in agricultural policies incorporated collectivization as a goal. In both industry and agriculture there was a common focus on remuneration in wages according to individual productivity and type of work (1976:128).

³ The problem of applying right and left 'labels' in China becomes even more pronounced with the shifting criteria for their imposition. Thus, one who was once denounced as a 'capitalist roadster' may be later dismissed as a 'left deviationist'.

trace the philosophical and political influences on various state figures. Nevertheless, the focus here is not on this dimension of analysis: I only introduce this aspect very briefly, and more for historical interest than explanatory power.

Before proceeding with the historical analysis, two factors which require elaboration are the components of Maoist thought as it had evolved from the pre-revolutionary period, and the particular characteristics of the Chinese state structure. The former is important if one hopes to understand the relationship of Maoism to Marxism in informing political action; the latter is necessary in order to give the reader a sense of the organizational structure of state power in the new regime.

The question of whether the political thought of Mao represents a significant or unique departure from Marxism has long plagued the debates of scholars of revolutionary literature. While the historical and analytical link to Marxism-Leninism is clear throughout his work, Mao also saw particularities in the Chinese situation which were not addressed by their model of revolution.⁴ Thus, he called for the adaptation of Marxist thought to the Chinese situation.

A communist is a Marxist internationalist but Marxism must take on a national form before it can be applied. There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete marxism. . . . The Sinification of Marxism--that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese peculiarities, using it according to these peculiarities--becomes a problem that must be understood and solved by the whole party without delay

⁴ For an extended discussion of Maoism and its evolution see Stuart Schram, 1969.

The modification of political theory to concrete historical circumstances was reflected in the particular alliance between the Chinese Communist Party and the peasantry. The recognition that Marxist class analysis and Leninist revolutionary strategy could be expanded to include the peasantry as a source of revolutionary potential was a significant strategic addition to Marxist analyses. It was not that Mao turned away from the Marxist definition of revolution; he "simply moved the location of the revolution" (Cohen, 1964:101). And, as was argued in the previous chapter, this originally occurred more as a consequence of being forced to abandon the urban bases, than as a result of analytical brilliance.

Central to Mao's view of socialism is the notion of continuing revolution in the gradual movement toward communism. Premised on a dialectical conception of history and social change, which is compatible with both Marxism and ancient Chinese philosophy,⁵ the continuing revolution is fostered, in Maoist thought, through implementation of the 'mass line.' A key concept in Mao's work, the mass line refers to the relationship between the Party leaders and the masses, based on the principle of 'from the masses to the masses.' Three key factors in mass line strategy are 1) close contact with the people and sensitivity to their local conditions: 2) summarizing and implementing the scattered views of

⁵An interesting discussion of the harmony of Marxism and Maoism, with early Chinese philosophy on the subject of contradiction, can be found in Tan, 1975.

the people: and 3) mobilizing the people for action through mass 'campaigns'.⁶ Developed during the Yanan period, and tested during the 1942-43 rectification and production campaigns, mass line strategy emerged as a significant element in post-war politics. Effective as a means of securing a wide organizational base of support, it also served to reorient leadership policies away from the more hierarchial form ordained by Lenin. While both Mao and Lenin used the concept of democratic centralism to describe their view of Party leadership, Lenin advocated a much more stratified means of decision-making, with allowance for discussion and consultation with the masses.⁷ Mao, on the other hand, emphasized the flow of communication from the masses to the leaders, and the active participation of the people in policy development at the grass roots. Whether this process was fully carried out in practice in post-war China is another question; the point is that the institutional and political structures of the new state were established on the premise of popular participation.

The question of the character of the Chinese state needs to be briefly addressed, especially given the particular nature of the relationship between Party and government structures in post-

⁶ For an early elaboration of Mao's views of this subject, see His "On Methods of Leadership" in Selected Works, Volume IV:111-117. A Useful secondary source on the evolution of mass line tactics in pre-revolutionary Yanan is available in Selden, 1977.

⁷ An extended discussion of this difference is found in Schram, 1973:27-32.

revolutionary China.⁸ Traditionally in socialist literature, there is a distinction between the Party, which is viewed as the organizational expression of the interests of the working classes, and the state, which is viewed as "the body of organized formal instruments from which command flows" (Schurmann, 1968:110). The Party defines the 'lines' of policy for the state to implement in the form of specific policy directives. In other words, the Party guides and the state bureaucracy administers. Whereas policy development and its administration were closely united under Party management in the Border Areas, the post-revolutionary period ushered in parallel and closely interdependent structures of policy formation and coordination through the Party, and of policy implementation and administration through the government apparatus. In each structure there is an extension of organizational organs from a national level through provincial, regional and county levels, down to village and municipality ranks. Through a formalized chain of communication the smallest village, or the most primary unit of production in the factory, is linked to the national leadership.

Because the state in socialism is characterized as a transitional structure, one whose 'functional' necessity will gradually erode, the Party is held up as the real instrument of the will of masses. Furthermore, under Mao's leadership, the Party came to characterize the state structure as in need of constant guidance

⁸ I do not deal with the People's Liberation Army here (even though it represents an important arm of the State) because I am more interested in the question of policy development.

to protect it from becoming too alienated from the people. According to Mao:

. . . the Party is the instrument that forges the resolution of the contradiction between state and society in socialism (quoted in Schurmann, 1968:112).

The need for a state structure to coordinate the various social, economic and military operations of society has led to a parallel structure of power in China. It is for precisely this reason that when I use the term 'the state' in reference to China, I am referring to the interrelated Party/state framework. As a centralized power structure, the Party/state has, in different periods, undergone attempts to increase decentralization of power, especially in administrative function. These shifts will be introduced later in the discussion. For now, it is important to note that the interdependence of the two structures of Party and government (to avoid confusion of terms, I use state only in reference to the dual structure) goes beyond the coordination of formulating policy and then implementing it. Throughout the period I am analyzing, senior members of the CCP simultaneously held senior posts in the government hierarchy. The interlocking authority links were more than merely symbolic; they served as an important check on the consistency of Party goals as articulated in various government directives.

In Figure 1, the chain of command in the Chinese Communist Party during the first decade is outlined.⁹ The national penetration of the CCP is evident in the number of levels on which Party organs

⁹ This chart does not include organizational re-arrangements carried out in the mid-sixties (such as the dissolution of the Secretariat).

operate. At the base of the Party structure lay the primary organization, the basic operational groups which maintained contact with the membership in the workplace, the educational system, the military, and even the neighborhood. Organized to recruit and mobilize party members to carry out Party decisions, and to represent local interests back to the Party, Houn estimates their number to be 250,000 in 1951 (1973:111). These units exist in larger form on county and city levels, and together constitute the larger provincial and regional congresses through elected delegates. The central Party structure which coordinates and oversees all this is composed of 3 key agencies: the National Party Congress, the Central Committee and the Politbureau. Under the original Constitution of the CCP of 1945,¹⁰ and in subsequent revisions of it, the National Party Congress was the legitimate source of authority for all organizations of the CCP. In practice however, the large size of the Congress, and the infrequency of its meetings have served to restrict its role.¹¹ The real power in policy-making was vested in the Central Committee, and more specifically, the Politbureau and its Standing Committee (equivalent to the pre-1956 Secretariat). Membership in the CC is ratified by the National Party Congress and includes the more senior members of the CCP. The CC is charged with supervising the various

¹⁰ Translated in Brandt et al., 1952.

¹¹ According to the 1945 Constitution, the Congress was to meet once every three years. Under the 1956 Constitution, it was changed to every five years. Between 1949 and 1969, however, the Congress convened only twice; the first session of the Eighth Party Congress was held in September, 1956 and the second in May, 1958.

SOURCE: Adapted From Prybyla, 1970:19

¹ Established in 1956 as executive organ of the Politbureau.

² Abolished in 1954.

functional departments of the Party and electing the smaller, and more powerful Politbureau, the essential seat of power in the CCP.¹²

With nineteen full and six alternate members by the end of the first decade, the Politbureau was the highest decision-making body in the Party structure (Schurmann, 1968:146). The various functional departments and committees under the Secretariat (later the Standing Committee of the Politbureau) represented the operational organs of the Party and dealt with issues such as the communication media, liaisons with minority groups, industry and trade, culture and education, political security, etc. Prior to 1956, there were also four regional bureaus established for Inner Mongolia, Shandong, South China and Xinjiang. Although attached to the control of the CC, they appear to have enjoyed somewhat more autonomy than the bureaus established in 1956 (Schurmann, 1968:148).

The growth in membership in the CCP increased significantly throughout the early years. It increased from 4.5 million in 1949, to 5.8 million in 1950 and 10.7 million in 1956 (Houn, 1973:113). The composition of the membership was drawn predominately from the peasants. In 1956 it was composed of 69 percent peasants, 14 percent workers and 1.25 percent intellectuals (Prybyla, 1970:18).

The development of government administrative structures in post-revolutionary China is also impressive for the extension of a political infrastructure on a national scale. This was accomplished through the establishment of national and provincial administrative

¹² Useful secondary sources on Party structure are Schurmann, 1968; Houn, 1973: Chapter VI and Barnett, 1967.

bodies with clear-cut reporting lines to the State Council, which in turn is responsible to the National People's Congress. Figure 2 outlines the administrative structures present in the early years of the new regime. While the 1954 Constitution replaced the 1949 Organic Law, wherein administrative powers were defined, it did not drastically change the structural organization of government, or its relationship to the Party. As Houn notes:

the new Constitution reaffirmed the hegemony of the CCP in the state. Structurally, the Constitution preserved the dual hierarchy of party and governmental organs with pyramidal arrangement of the party organization paralleling the territorial tiers of the governmental organs at each level of the hierarchy operating under the dual direction of the party committee on the corresponding level and governmental organs on the next higher level (1973:132).

The hegemony of the party in this dual structure is a significant factor in understanding how CCP policies were implemented. With a dual control structure operating through both Party and administrative channels, consistency between party line and government strategy was enhanced.

An additional source of control exercised by the party is vested in the mass organizations, which are broad-based units of mass participation with reporting lines to the CCP. Based on occupation, sex, ethnicity and various other criteria, these organizational units serve various functions. As grass-roots organizations, they provide a means for communicating the needs and interests of the people to

FIGURE 2: CHINESE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE: THE FIRST DECADE

SOURCE: adapted from Prybyla, 1970:27.

¹ Prior to 1954, was the Central People's Government Administrative Council.

² Prior to 1954, was the Revolutionary Military Council.

³ Prior to 1954, was the Procurator-General's Office.

⁴ For example, Nationalities, Overseas, Chinese Affairs, People's Control.

⁵ Abolished in 1954.

the Party.¹³ Equally, if not more important, they serve a role as bases of mobilization for various Party-sponsored campaigns. The ability to mobilize quickly for a specific production campaign, for example, is premised on the existence of an efficient organizational base at the grass-roots. The distribution of local organizational cells coordinated by a larger executive committee responsible to provincial and, ultimately, national control is the means by which this efficiency in control is achieved. At the same time it provides an effective and impressive mechanism for extending the influence of the CCP. By early 1953, membership in several of these organizations was already significant (Prybyla, 1970:29):

. Women's Federation	76.0 million
. Trade Unions	10.2 million
. China New Democratic Youth League	9.0 million
. Students' Federation	3.4 million
. Sino-Soviet Friendship Association	69.0 million
. Peasants Association	88.0 million
. Rural Supply and Marketing Cooperatives	148.0 million

¹³ More sceptical Sinologists such as Prybyla dismiss mass organizations as mere "transmission belts" for Party policy (1970:28). While this is probably one purpose served, it overlooks the active role played by these groups in shaping campaigns such as land and marriage reform. To ignore this aspect conceals the total picture.

As a means for maximizing both policy control among the masses and effective mobilization for policy implementation, the mass organizations in the first decade of CCP power played a crucial role. They represent the institutional mechanism through which Mao's 'mass line' principles were operationalized.

In summary, there are three general characteristics of the Chinese state structure, as it emerged in the formative years of the first decade, which merit attention. First, is the extent of political and administrative control made possible through the nature of the dual authority structures reaching from national to local levels. The layers of government and Party administration which were interlocked, yet operationally autonomous, maximized the realization of national policy goals. Predicated on the principle of democratic centralism, this framework permitted both control from the top and input from the lower levels of the 'pyramid' (although how much input would become a later subject of debate.)

A second factor, and one related to the first, is the ability of the new state to mobilize its resources quickly. The tight control exercised through both political and mass organizational structures gave the Party/state a leverage of national scope for carrying out central planning objectives.

Finally, the hegemony of the Chinese Communist Party within the overall state structure cannot be ignored. The centralization of responsibility for determining overall economic, social and political objectives was vested in the leadership of the CCP. As the 'voice of the masses', the Party enjoyed an a priori legitimacy which the

government could never pretend to possess.

B. Reconstruction in the New Democracy

Two serious problems confronted the new regime in 1949: one of a political nature and one of an economic nature. Politically, the CCP was faced with the task of consolidating their power on a national level and of establishing a foothold among the people in the 'new' liberated areas. This problem was particularly acute in areas such as South China, where victory over the Guomindang forces came much earlier than expected. There, and in the urban areas, the CCP had not had as sufficient a period of time as in the Northern Border Regions to develop a political base. As a consequence, they were faced with the twin tasks of excising the traditional power structures in the recently liberated areas and of securing the loyalty of the masses. In both processes, the continuation of a land redistribution policy, developed in the Border Regions, was to prove effective.

The economic dilemma facing the new state was that of implementing a socialist program of development in a context of economic crises. The CCP had inherited a war-ravaged economy, one characterized by land fragmentation, technological backwardness, a narrowly-based modern industrial sector, rampant inflation and serious population pressure on the available land resources.¹⁴ The

¹⁴ An extended discussion of the state of the economy in 1949 is available in Eckstein, 1968 and Chen and Galenson, 1969: 1-32.

need to stabilize and restore the tattered economic infrastructure placed serious limitations on the range and extent of collectivist strategies the state could engage in. The result was an attempt to lay the material and institutional foundation for the future collectivization of production, while at the same time permitting private production and accumulation to co-exist with state-owned production processes.

The overall program under which both of these problems were defined and solutions articulated, was the 'New Democracy', an approach to building socialism predicated on the belief that agrarian and industrial reform must precede the transition to socialism.

Socialism could not, in other words, be simply imposed on a backward, feudal society; a period of gradual transition was necessary. This framework, developed in the Border Regions in the early 1940's, was made explicit in 'The Common Program For The People's Republic of China', the official creed of the new state, adopted on September 30, 1949.¹⁵ Article 26 of the Program, in reference to general economic policy, underlines the principle of cooperation between state and private sectors:

The basic principle for economic construction of the People's Republic of China is to attain the goal of developing production and bringing about a prosperous economy through the policies of taking into account both public and private interests, benefits to both labour and capital, mutual aid between the city and countryside and interflow of goods at home and abroad. The state shall coordinate and regulate state-owned economy, cooperative

¹⁵ This document remained the definitive statement on overall state policy for five years, until it was replaced by the 1954 Constitution.

economy, individual economy of peasants and handicraftmen, private capitalist economy, and state capitalist economy. . . so that all components of the social economy can play their part. . . . (translated in Selden, 1979:189).

The strategy of supporting a private capitalist economy was directly tied to the state's need to foster a period of economic stabilization in the short run, before launching the full-scale socialization of the economy. Historically, the economic development of China had been marked by regional imbalances, dependence on Western powers, a lagging industrial base, agricultural stagnation and an inadequate national transportation sector. The effect of these factors on overall economic performance was compounded by years of civil war, in addition to the Sino-Japanese War. CCP estimates for 1949 judged heavy-industry production to be equal to 30 percent of its previous peak level; consumer-goods and agricultural production represented 70 percent of their previous peak levels (Eckstein, 1977:26).¹⁶ Policies formulated in this period, then, can be understood more as an attempt to restore the economy than transform it. The cornerstone in this approach was the intensification of agrarian reform in order to increase agricultural productivity and lay the basis for the future socialist transformation of agricultural production.

¹⁶ The already-small industrial base was further weakened after the Japanese surrender in 1945. Russian troops occupying Manchuria dismantled and took home about 50 percent of Manchuria's modern industrial equipment (Eckstein, 1977:26):

1. Agrarian Reform

The purpose behind agrarian reform was two-fold: to eliminate the hold of landlords over scarce land resources, particularly in the recently liberated areas, and to increase agricultural production by 'releasing' the productive potential of the peasantry. The basic document of this program was the Agrarian Reform Law of 1950 which outlined a strategy which was both political and economic in nature. It abolished the feudal system of landholding and privilege, but in doing so moderated the harsh treatment of rich peasants, provided for in the more radical 1947 Agrarian Law.¹⁷ The latter were permitted to keep any land cultivated by either themselves or hired labourers; only those who rented large tracts to tenants had their land confiscated. This served to politically single out the landlord class as the target of land reform (ensuring their elimination as a potential political threat), yet managed to appease middle and well-to-do peasants who maintained an advantage in productive resources over poor peasants (see Table 4). As a consequence legitimacy for the new state was enhanced. And more importantly, agricultural output was stabilized, and even increased. Cereal production, for example, increased from 113 million tons in 1949 to 164 million tons in 1952, exceeding a pre-war peak output of 150 million tons (Chesneaux, 1979:44).

Also significant was the effect the land reform movement had on the buttressing of independent household production. As Stacey

¹⁷ The 1950 Law did not alter the land redistribution decisions, already made under the 1947 Law in the Border Regions.

Table 4: Results of Land Redistribution

	% of Households	% of crop land owned		Average size of landholding (in mou) ¹	
		Before ² Reform	After ³ Reform	Before Reform	After Reform
Landlords	2.6	28.7	2.1	116.1	12.0
Rich Peasants	3.6	17.7	6.4	35.7	26.3
Middle Peasants	35.8	30.3	44.8	15.8	18.5
Poor Peasants and Farm Labourers	57.1	23.5	46.8	6.2	12.1

SOURCE: Selden, 1979:37.

¹ One mou equals 0.66 acre.

² Refers to J.L. Buck (1956) data for 1933: p. 271, 368.

³ Refers to 1952 data cited in P. Schran, The Development of Chinese Agriculture 1950-1959 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), pp. 21-22.

has argued, "the integrity of the household as the unit of production" was protected because it was the primary unit for implementing all agrarian reform measures--taxation, rent reduction, land allotments, etc. (1979:194-96). By ensuring the conditions under which private agricultural production could be sustained, the household productive unit was reinforced.

While strengthening the private economy, the new state also began to lay the institutional basis for its transformation. In agriculture, this took the form of mutual aid teams, early versions of producer cooperatives which were later expanded in the collectivization campaign of the mid-fifties. Because average land holdings did not exceed 2.5 acres in 1950 (Eckstein, 1977:69), the pressure for some form of cooperative management to increase productivity was strong. Mutual aid teams, a central aspect of CCP agricultural strategy even in the early Jiangxi period, were based upon the pooling of household labour for agricultural work, particularly during the busy seasons. Comprising, on the average, four to six households, they gradually evolved to pool household land, and other productive resources besides labour. Compensation (either monetary or in kind) was accorded on the basis of labour and resources contributed but each household retained private ownership rights. By 1952, over 40 percent of households were involved in mutual aid production (Larsen, 1967:216).

The significance of the growth of mutual aid teams for ~~women~~ will be discussed shortly; it is, however, important to underline here the point that they built upon the peasant family economy, and

at the same time created the conditions for the eventual transcendence of such an economy. In doing so, the state was forced to move slowly; peasant conservatism regarding private ownership of land and household accumulation of surplus was a significant barrier to full scale collectivization. A first step in that direction was the institutionalization of cooperative arrangements on a small-scale, arrangements which did not radically alter the traditional production process. In the case of mutual aid teams, such cooperative arrangements had existed on a loose, informal basis for many generations among peasant families (see Selden, 1971:242-243). The CCP merely took these tradition-based relations and made them the principal basis of their agricultural development plan.

The success of agricultural rehabilitation policies can be measured both in terms of the land transfer results (as shown in Table 4) and in terms of agricultural output. The structural transformation of land ownership meant that access to land was guaranteed for a large proportion of peasants who had been previously unable to own land. In addition, the material basis of power of landlords was virtually eliminated. In terms of agricultural productivity, there is general agreement among scholars that the policies of the new regime were successful (see Larsen, 1967:54-56 and Prybyla, 1970:49-52). Based on an agricultural gross output value index of 100 in 1949, the output in agriculture was 117.7 in 1950, 128.8 in 1951, and 148.5 in 1952 (State Statistical Bureau,

1960:118).¹⁸

Sinologist Mark Selden argues that the agrarian reform movement was also responsible for increasing available resources for investment by the state. Net investment represented 1.8 percent of net domestic expenditure in 1933 at the time of Buck's surveys and 15.4 percent in 1952, at the end of the rehabilitation period (1979:38). Finally, the increase in agricultural consumer goods was significant: the marketed share of gross agricultural output increased from 17 percent in 1950 to 27 percent in 1952 (Pyrbyla, 1970:52).

The relevance of agricultural output to overall economic performance continued throughout the period of rehabilitation, but experienced a decline relative to other types of economic activity, particularly industry (see Table 5). The increased share of modern sectors of production in the national product reflected the initial attempts of the new state to increase output in the modern sectors, particularly in heavy industry. This can be seen for example in Table 6, which demonstrates the decreasing share of fixed investment by the state in agriculture and the increasing share in industry. Thus, the growth that agricultural output was experiencing, was not based on a capital intensive strategy on the part of the state.

¹⁸ These figures, derived from the officially-released and reconstructed estimates published in Ten Great Years, are usually treated with some caution in the secondary literature. This is based more on the unsophisticated nature of the statistical system in 1952, not perception of bias. In fact, many argue the under-reporting of growth in this period (Larsen, 1967:57).

Table 5: Inter-sectoral Composition of
Gross National Product, 1933
and 1952 (percent)

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Sector	1933		1952	
	1933 prices	1952 prices	1933 prices	1952 prices
<u>Agriculture</u>	65.0	57.0	56.0	48.0
<u>Modern sectors:</u>	14.3	17.4	22.7	30.9
Industry, mining and utilities	3.4	6.6	6.2	11.5
Transport	1.4	1.8	2.5	2.9
Trade	6.0	6.0	6.0	10.2
Finance	0.7	0.6	2.4	1.8
Government Administration	2.8	2.4	5.6	4.5
<u>Construction</u>	1.1	1.7	1.8	2.5
<u>Traditional Sectors:</u>	14.4	15.2	12.9	13.1
Handicraft	7.0	7.4	6.5	6.6
Transport	4.1	4.4	3.6	3.7
Trade	3.3	3.4	2.8	2.8
<u>Other</u>	5.2	8.7	6.6	5.5

SOURCE: A. Eckstein, 1977: Table 1-2, page 13.

Table 6: Sector Shares of Gross Fixed Investment (percent)

Sector	1950	1951	1952
Agriculture	31.5	25.5	24.9
Industry, construction and public utilities	21.0	27.7	28.7
Heavy Industry ¹	—	—	15.0
Light Industry	—	—	10.0
Transportation and Communications	12.3	11.8	10.3
Residential construction	12.4	12.8	14.6
Service and trade	22.8	22.2	21.6
Total fixed investment ²	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Hollister, 1967:128, Table 4

¹ (—) indicates data not available.

² Subtotals do not always equal 100.0 because of rounding.

Rather, institutional reorganization of land ownership and labour-intensive production processes were the mechanisms for 'unleashing' productive potential, according to CCP strategists.

2. Industrial Reform

The objectives of the new state in policies regarding industry were to rehabilitate and expand the industrial sector for increased productivity, and to begin the introduction of state ownership. The reasons for allowing the continued presence of a private capitalist sector have already been discussed; they essentially reflect a strategic need to ~~rely~~ on private capital, in addition to state capital investment, to secure economic stability.

The industrial base inherited by the CCP was small and dominated by traditional production processes, with little technological sophistication. It was heavily oriented to light industrial production in textiles, food processing and various other consumer goods. In 1952 this was still evident with total industrial production composed of 35 percent producer goods (i.e., machinery and industrial materials) and 65 percent consumer goods (Eckstein, 1977:215). Throughout the rehabilitation period, the state attempted to revitalize the war-torn industrial base, partially through increasing the share it received of capital investment (Table 6). The lion's share of industrial investment went to heavy industry; in 1952 it constituted 76 percent of overall industrial investment (Pyrbyla, 1970:56).

The industrial infrastructure was concentrated largely in eastern and southern coastal urban areas, as well as several cities in the north. By all indicators the urban economy grew significantly in this period; for example, industrial production grew by 35 percent between 1950 and 1952 compared to 8 percent for handicraft production (Field, 1967:273; Table 2). Within industry, growth rates varied depending on the branch; textiles, for example, grew by 36 percent compared to 110 percent for ferrous metals. Growth in production was accompanied by expansion in industrial employment; it increased from 3 million in 1949 to over 5 million in 1952 (Emerson, 1967:460-461; Table A-1). In terms of percentage distribution, this indicated a shift from 11.6 percent nonagricultural employment to 14.3 percent.

The reorganization of ownership structures in industry took place gradually. The state took immediate ownership over former Nationlist-owned enterprises which were concentrated in modern sectors of industry and banking. Private capital which continued to operate did so largely in light industry, commerce and handicrafts (Selden, 1979:43 and Field, 1967:272-75). The state encouraged four different types of ownership during this period: state, joint state-private, private and cooperative. As already indicated, agriculture was dominated by private ownership, with cooperative production arrangements encouraged. In industry, ownership varied by sector. Property relations in traditional sectors, for example small-scale industry and handicrafts, were predominantly private. In 1952 handicraft industries were 96.9 percent individually-owned and only 3.1 percent cooperatively-owned (Eckstein, 1977:74-75).

In modern sectors one finds a combination of state ownership, joint public and private ownership, and a significant percentage of privately-owned enterprises. Under joint ownership, both the state and the independent capitalist share in a fixed rate of capital accumulation, but the output goals are established by the state. Throughout this period, the CCP launched a series of policies designed to both restrict the size of the private sector and bring it under more direct cooperation with the state. These included measures such as undercutting market prices of privately-produced goods, heavy fines for tax infractions, and guaranteed purchase agreements with private firms (Eckstein, 1977:76). As a result of these tactics, the involvement of the state, either directly or indirectly, in industrial enterprises gradually increased (see Table 7).

The gradualist approach adopted by the CCP toward socialization of industry was also reflected in the position taken on wages for workers in nonagricultural production. The state endorsed a system of differential wages as incentives for increased productivity, and in recognition of skill variables. Mao's principle secretary Chen Bo-da, also a member of the Central Committee, clarified the official policy on wages in nonagricultural sectors:¹⁹

A correct policy on wages is one which, in accordance with the general living conditions of the particular place and time, with the old pre-liberation wages as the basis, makes reasonable and proper adjustments of wages, and on this basis carries out a reasonable and progressive wage system by the piece, by grade, by share of work. . . . Complete

¹⁹ Full text translated in Selden, 1979; see "The Labour Policy and Policy for Developing Industry", pp. 265-270.

Table 7: Socialization of Industry; Percentage
Distribution of Industrial Gross
Output (excluding handicrafts), 1949-52.

	State Industry	Joint State- Private Industry	Private Industries with State Guidance	Private Industry
1949	34.7	2.0	7.5	55.8
1950	45.3	2.9	14.9	36.7
1951	45.9	4.0	21.4	28.7
1952	56.0	5.0	21.9	17.1

SOURCE: State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:38

uniform equality is impossible. To sum up, the precondition for deciding everything should be that it must be favorable to the constant rising of production (translated in Selden, 1979:268).

There was, in other words, an attempt to use material incentives, and at the same time maintain wage gaps between types of employment. Earlier in the same directive, Chen explicitly rejected demands for equalizing the salaries of technical personnel and "ordinary workers". Such an approach would, he argued, "injure the initiative of technical personnel in production" (1979:267). Faced with the need to attract scientific and technical personnel in the context of a limited supply,²⁰ the state chose to encourage recruitment partially through hierarchial wage structures. Differentials also existed between different industrial sectors; coal and electrical sectors, controlled by the state, fared much better than textiles or paper sectors. The average annual wage (in yuan) in 1952 was 800 in electricity, 810 in coal, 560 in textiles and 496.9 in paper (Howe, 1973:43; Table 28).

The state's approach to industrial development had significant implications for the structure of nonagricultural

²⁰ See Chu-Yuan Cheng, "Scientific and Engineering Manpower in Communist China" (1976) for a discussion of the labour needs in this sector and the subsequent transformation of the educational system.

employment.²¹ According to official estimates, total nonagricultural employment increased from 26 million in 1949 to 37 million in 1952, averaging 12 percent per year (Emerson, 1965b:6). It is generally conceded in secondary analyses that the growth rate may have been somewhat exaggerated due to an increasing sophistication of reporting techniques by 1952, which would uncover persons 'hidden' in earlier surveys. Nevertheless it is also agreed that the inaccuracy of data would not drastically alter the apparent pattern of increased growth in employment (Emerson, 1967:438).

Most of the increase in nonagricultural employment occurred in the expanding state sector rather than in the private sector. Emerson estimates a total increase of 10.5 million between 1949 and 1952, of which 7.4 million were in the state sector, increasing the latter's share of nonagricultural employment from one-fifth to one-third (1967:43, 440). The attention of state investment to the modern sector (defined as including all workers and employees) over

²¹ This term is used in the available employment surveys to include all employment in nonagricultural labour, whether it occurs in rural or urban areas. The term includes employment in modern and state sectors, and in traditional sectors. The former includes two categories of employed persons--workers and employees (roughly equivalent to blue-collar and white collar respectively). Both terms indicate a 'contractual' relationship to the employer and the exchange of a wage. For this reason, many employed persons in traditional occupations such as handicrafts, fishing, petty trade, etc. were not classified as workers or employees. The officially-released surveys of the State Statistical Bureau did not use the all-inclusive category of nonagricultural employment, referring generally to workers and employees only. Reconstructed estimates, such as John P. Emerson's, attempt to include the excluded categories. For full discussion, see Emerson, 1965a:41-51.

the traditional sector (defined as nonagricultural labourers excluded from workers and employees category), was reflected in growth levels of employment as indicated in Table 8. While employment in the modern sector nearly doubled during the rehabilitation period, reaching 15.7 million by 1952, employment in the traditional sector experienced slight growth but remained between 18 and 21 million. Industrial employment expanded by over 2 million workers and employees, an average growth rate of 20 percent. State-sector industrial employment constituted 1.8 million of that total increase, or 82 percent (Emerson, 1967:443). Employment in capital construction, trade, and the food and drink sectors also increased significantly, reflecting the economic renewal and expansion of this period.

The profile which emerges of this period is one of economic stabilization, expansion of the state sector, increased investment in heavy industry and the rise of the modern mode of organization. The latter had not yet displaced the traditional sector, but it was apparent the modern sector was rapidly increasing in importance, in terms of both gross output (Table 5) and employment (Table 8). The largest branch of employment in the economy was still the traditional sector, with handicrafts leading the way in this sector and being engaged largely in the production of consumer goods.

The situation of women must be understood in the context of the overall economic profile of this period. The patterns of their social participation are inextricably linked to the overall economic objectives of the new state.

Table 8: Nonagricultural Employment by Branch
of the Economy and Modern and Traditional
Components, 1949-52 (in thousands).

Branch of economy and component	1949	1950	1951	1952
<u>Modern</u> ¹				
Total	7,977	10,166	12,705	15,656
Material production branches	5,176	6,163	8,066	10,298
Industry	3,059	3,386	4,379	5,263
Water Conservancy	61	80	108	134
Capital construction	200	400	600	1,048
Transport, posts and telecommunications	634	799	964	1,129
Trade, and the food and drink industry	1,222	1,498	2,015	2,724
Nonproductive branches	2,801	4,003	4,639	5,358
Finance, banking, and insurance	—	—	—	346
Education, medicine and cultural affairs	1,176	—	—	2,392
Government administration	—	—	—	1,523
Mass organizations	—	—	—	1,053
Urban public utilities	—	—	—	41
Meteorology	1	1	2	3
<u>Traditional</u> ²				
Total	18,290	20,148	22,025	21,096
Material production branches	17,309	19,159	20,937	19,902
Handicraft and carrier services	5,855	7,229	7,258	7,364
Salt extraction	500	500	500	500
Fishing	800	1,200	1,268	1,336
Transport, posts and telecommunications	3,526	3,526	3,526	3,526
Trade, and the food and drink industry	6,628	6,704	8,385	7,176
Nonproductive branches	981	989	1,088	1,194
Finance, banking and insurance	—	—	—	5
Services	417	425	434	443
Traditional medicine	564	564	654	746

SOURCE: Emerson, 1967:464; Table A-4.

¹ The modern component of the economy is constituted by workers and employees in nonagricultural branches.

² The traditional component of the economy is constituted by persons engaged in nonagricultural occupations and not classified as workers or employees.

³ (—) indicates data not available.

thrust of their work in rural areas. In "Resolutions on the Present Task of the Women's Movement in China", the Congress adopted the 1948 framework for action:

As to the work in the countryside of the Liberated Areas we concur with the 'Decision on the Present Women's Work in the Rural Districts of the Liberated Areas' adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in December, 1948, which emphatically pointed out that women in the old Liberated Areas should regard the active participation in production as the central link of all work. . . . Rural women can go one step further in their liberation through raising their political and cultural levels, mobilizing them to join actively in the democratic political reconstruction, and promoting hygienic work for women and children (translated in Croll, 1974:9-10).

The Congress also established the All-China Democratic Women's Federation,²³ a national mass organization which would provide a centralized leadership for the various women's organizations (see Figure 3). Membership in the Federation was composed of various women's organizations, or women's associations existing on regional and local levels. Actual delegates to the All-China Women's Congress, which appointed the membership and executive committee of the Federation, were elected through a hierarchical series of congresses (or representative conferences) established at village, district, county and provincial levels. On each level, local representatives were elected by the respective congress to serve as an executive council or committee for implementing the work of the Federation. Chosen to carry out the daily work of the respective congresses, these councils or committees had a different

²³ In 1957 the name was changed to the All-China Women's Federation. In the literature it is usually simply referred to as the Women's Federation.

thrust of their work in rural areas. In "Resolutions on the Present Task of the Women's Movement in China", the Congress adopted the 1948 framework for action:

As to the work in the countryside of the Liberated Areas we concur with the 'Decision on the Present Women's Work in the Rural Districts of the Liberated Areas' adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in December, 1948, which emphatically pointed out that women in the old Liberated Areas should regard the active participation in production as the central link of all work. . . . Rural women can go one step further in their liberation through raising their political and cultural levels, mobilizing them to join actively in the democratic political reconstruction, and promoting hygienic work for women and children (translated in Croll, 1974:9-10).

The Congress also established the All-China Democratic Women's Federation,²³ a national mass organization which would provide a centralized leadership for the various women's organizations (see Figure 3). Membership in the Federation was composed of various women's organizations, or women's associations existing on regional and local levels. Actual delegates to the All-China Women's Congress, which appointed the membership and executive committee of the Federation, were elected through a hierarchical series of congresses (or representative conferences) established at village, district, county and provincial levels. On each level, local representatives were elected by the respective congress to serve as an executive council or committee for implementing the work of the Federation. Chosen to carry out the daily work of the respective congresses, these councils or committees had a different

²³ In 1957 the name was changed to the All-China Women's Federation. In the literature it is usually simply referred to as the Women's Federation.

FIGURE 3: STRUCTURE OF WOMEN'S FEDERATIONS IN CHINA
(arrow indicates election of delegates)

¹ Convened in 1949, 1953 and 1957 during the first decade of power.

label in various regions. They were referred to either as the Women's Federation Committee or, in the old liberated areas in particular, simply the Women's Association. In either case, these were a major point of contact for transmitting direction and mobilizing women.

They were not, however, always the most important ones. As discussed in the previous chapter, women were also involved in the Peasants' Association, a particularly powerful organization during the land redistribution movement. Regional variations in the productive role of women had a variable impact on how women were organized. As Davin notes (1976:55), in regions where female participation in social production was relatively high, and in older liberated areas, women were encouraged to join in land reform with males in either the Poor Peasants' League or the New Peasants' Association. In recently liberated areas and regions with low social participation of women, the CCP encouraged mobilization of women through mixed peasant organizations and exclusive female organizations.²⁴ The local and regional branches of the Peasants' Association were encouraged to strive for a quota of one-quarter to one-third female membership, yet such aims were seldom realized in the early stages of land reform (Johnson, 1976:147-148).

The regional variations in the institutional mechanism used for mobilizing women appear to be tied to strategic factors in the

²⁴ Davin bases her argument on the 1948 report of the CCP "Experience in mobilizing women during the land reform movement in Beiyue".

productivity of women as workers. Where women were already contributing significantly to production, the state saw little need for separate and strong women's organizations. In areas of low female productivity, the opposite was true. The state's fostering of independent female activism, especially during the land reform campaign, could be interpreted, then, more as a response to the economic crises of a stagnant economy than to the "special interests" of women. Certainly, this comes as no surprise, given the very obvious need in the rehabilitation period to drastically increase production. All mass organizations in this period were focused on the campaign for economic recovery, and women's organization were no exception. What is significant, however, is the extent to which the agrarian reform campaign, the key to which was land redistribution, undercut a parallel campaign in family reform, the key to which was the 1950 Marriage Law.

1. Marriage Reform

The Marriage Law of 1950 was enacted on May 1st, one month preceding the Agrarian Reform Law of June, 1950. The scope of the Marriage Law was impressive. It was designed both as a mechanism for resolving marital disputes, such as divorce, child custody, adultery, wife-beating, etc., and as an instrument for changing society, through re-education and the re-structuring of the family unit (Meijer, 1971:70). The 1950 Law was a significant addition to earlier versions because it explicitly established the basis upon which marriage relations could be evaluated. It admonished 'feudal

behaviour' in the conjugal family, and sought to define the family relation for the new China. Chapter III of the new Law outlined the 'Rights and Duties of Husband and Wife', and included references to 'companions' who were equal in status and bound to love, respect and assist one another. Article 9 extends these rights to include freedom of choice in one's occupation and social activities.

Throughout the various articles, the Marriage Law is permeated by a vision of the harmonious, 'democratic' family. It is not that divorce is discouraged; divorce is defined as immediate for those couples who have mutually consented, or who have sought reconciliation and failed. Nevertheless, there is an increasing shift toward emphasis on the family unit and its importance in building a new society. The new and more democratic family form is explicitly tied to the attempt to increase the productivity of the people. Chen Shaoyu, who introduced the Marriage Law into the Central People's Government Committee, explained the purpose behind the law:

With a view to increasing the productive forces of the new society in the political, economic and cultural fields, and loosening the fetters that have impeded their development, it is necessary that, together with the reform of the total social system, the men and women, and especially the latter, be liberated from the bondage of the old marriage system and that a completely new system be established in conformity with the new social development (translated in Meijer, 1971:78).

The interrelation of the land reform campaigns and marriage reform policies are therefore significant. In both, one can see the strategy of breaking the household unit out of the feudal context of organization and thus consolidating the transcendence of feudal power structures. At the same time there was an economic purpose at work;

releasing productive potential. In land reform, the opportunity for increased productivity and accumulation (through taxes) by the state was realized by supporting a healthy, independent peasant farm economy. The implications this had for marriage reform were two-fold. In order to firmly secure the principle of individual land allotments, thereby undermining clan control of land, it was necessary to abolish the feudal family system which mitigated against this policy. In order to ensure the participation of women in the productivity campaign, it was further necessary to redefine their rights within the new family system.

The success of the new state in implementing the Marriage Law is questionable. Evidence suggests that a concerted effort by central authorities to fully implement family reform was not forthcoming until the completion of land reform at the end of 1952 (Kristeva, 1975:58; Stacey, 1979:256-57 and Meijer, 1971:116-128). The reasons for this have to do with an inadequate number of cadres trained to supervise its implementation, combined with active, and often violent, resistance on the part of male peasants.²⁵

When the state did launch an extensive campaign to implement the Marriage Law in 1953, as the rehabilitation period was drawing to a close, the shift toward an emphasis on the maintenance of the family unit and the marriage relation was the dominant focus. The intervening years had witnessed an increase in the number of

²⁵ Various historical accounts indicate instances of murder or suicide of women seeking divorce, male cadres who refused to grant divorce requests and ridicule of those who worked for family reform. See, for example, Myrdal, 1965.

divorces, to the extent that the Marriage Law was popularly known as the "divorce law." Meijer estimates there were 800,000 divorces per year between 1950 and 1953, although the fact of under-reporting could push the total much higher (1971:114).²⁶ At the same time numerous investigation teams had reported on the unevenness of the Law's implementation, the failure of mediation in solving disputes and the prevalence of traditional marriage arrangements (such as bride-price and arranged marriages). The reports were followed by the "Directive of the Government Administrative Council", signed by Zhou En-lai on February 1, 1953.²⁷

As the key document for the final implementation campaign for family reform, the Directive is significant for its position on marital harmony. Reform through coercion was now rejected in favour of an emphasis on peaceful persuasion and education. Whereas previous campaigns stressed the dissolution of all feudal marriages, this Directive referred to divorce being appropriate for "completely" feudal relationships. Reference to the feudal "bondage" of women was replaced by an emphasis on working to revive an unhappy marriage, even those arranged through feudal practices:

As regards the phenomenon of disharmony in families which have been established through marriage by arrangement and purchase and sale and therefore lack freedom, we must adopt the method of education with criticism, raising the

²⁶ His figures do not include extra-judicial cases wherein divorce was brought about by mutual consent or traditional "repudiation" of the wife.

²⁷ A translation of this Directive is available in Meijer, 1971:Appendix IX.

consciousness of their members, improving and steadying the relations between husband and wife (Zhou translated in Meijer, 1971:304).

Zhou goes on to elaborate the provision for divorce only after "complete deterioration" of the marriage and following "serious work of mediation and persuasion". The point of this Directive was to underline the fact that the state only wanted to eliminate the feudal family system, without creating a situation of tension within the family. Cadres were explicitly forbidden to engage in work which would provoke the latter:

In order to concentrate our strength on the overthrow of the feudal marriage system, it is absolutely not allowed to extend the problems to the relations between men and women in general or to the relationships within the family, so as not to confuse the movement (Zhou translated in Meijer, 1971:304).

This strategy is a significant retreat from the principles adopted in 1950, especially those outlining the rights and responsibilities of each partner within a marriage. The retreat can be understood in the overall context of the time. Economic recovery had been fairly successful, land reform was complete and the state was beginning to launch a policy program designed to finalize its transition to socialism. Central to its strategy was the necessity of 'rescuing' family life, in order to increase productivity with the family household. An unstable marital and familial structure was at the same time an unstable unit of production. The solution was to eliminate only those structural characteristics of the feudal family which interfered with the authority of the state and the efficiency

of its production goals.²⁸

2. Women in Social Production

The extent to which women entered social production, and the conditions under which they did so, are critical to an attempt to determine the sex division of labour in this period. In order to facilitate discussion, I have divided their productive tasks into categories of agricultural and nonagricultural labour. Certainly the more significant category, in terms of numbers, is the agricultural sphere. Table 9 indicates reconstructed estimates of agricultural and nonagricultural populations between the ages of 15 and 59.²⁹ These figures represent the number of men and women of working age who are able to participate, not the number necessarily engaged in production. Maria Thorborg's study of women in rural production, which uses Hou's estimates of the agricultural population, suggests a rough estimate for the number of women engaged in agricultural labour, including subsidiary production (1978:584-85). Comparing various official and non-official reconstructed estimates, Thorborg suggests a range of between 40 and 70 million women active in the agricultural labour force between 1949 and 1952. As a proportion of

²⁸ For this reason, Stacey (1979, 1980) interprets CCP family policy in this period as restorationist, in the sense that it restored a patriarchal base while changing its feudal structure.

²⁹ Agricultural and nonagricultural populations are not directly equivalent to rural and urban populations, given that nonagricultural tasks may be located in a rural setting. Nevertheless there is a close correlation between growth in urban areas in this period and growth in the non-agricultural population (Hou, 1968:344).

Table 9: Agricultural and Nonagricultural
Population, Ages 15-59 (1949-1960,
in millions).

	<u>Agricultural Population¹</u>		<u>Nonagricultural Population</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1949	123.7	113.3	36.9	33.8
1950	125.2	114.7	38.5	35.2
1951	126.3	115.7	40.3	36.9
1952	128.0	117.3	42.4	38.9
1953	129.7	118.8	44.6	40.9
1954	132.0	120.9	46.4	42.5
1955	135.0	123.7	47.2	43.2
1956	136.6	125.2	49.5	45.4
1957	140.5	128.7	51.2	46.9
1958	140.3	128.5	56.2	51.5
1959	141.1	129.3	60.2	55.1
1960	141.3	129.4	64.1	58.7
Change:: 1949-1960	+14%	+14%	+74%	+74%

SOURCE: Hou, 1968:348; Table 7.

¹ Agricultural Population includes persons engaged in agricultural occupations only, both agricultural and subsidiary occupations and subsidiary occupations only.

the available female agricultural population, this would represent a low of 35 percent and a high of 62 percent (based on calculations from Table 9). The fairly significant range in participation is related to regional variations in both type of agriculture and length of contact with CCP land reform policies. Concerning the latter, Thorborg found in the 'old' liberated areas that by 1952, 40 to 50 percent of working-age women were involved in agricultural production, compared to an average of 20 percent for the 'new' liberated areas (1978:570; Table 3). Even more significant was the influence of agricultural seasons. In the "busy seasons" when more labour was traditionally required for planting or harvesting, the rate of female participation was higher. Thus, estimates of annual peak involvement of women suggest a participation rate of 80 to 90 percent in 1949 (1978:574). An interesting finding in Thorborg's data is that this participation rate appears to have declined by 1951, to 70 to 80 percent. Whether this represents an actual decrease in the proportion of women involved in high season agriculture, or an over-estimate of 1949 involvement, Thorborg is unable to conclusively demonstrate (1978:575). Nevertheless, it is partial evidence that the rehabilitation period did not significantly increase the percentage of women involved in agriculture.

This becomes more evident when these figures are compared with John Buck's data on female participation in the late 1920's and early 1930's. In his study, almost 30 percent of women (as a national average) were engaged in agriculture (including subsidiary labour) with a slightly higher rate in the double-cropping region of

the South, where demands on seasonal labour input were higher (1956:371-72). This participation rate is higher than the 20 percent rate given by Thorborg for the new liberated areas in 1952. Granted, their participation rate rose to an average of between 40 to 50 percent, in areas where land reform was completed. But the indication that the participation rate was highest for seasonal rather than permanent participation, can be interpreted as a response to the productivity campaigns of this period. The increased mobilization of women during the high season was directly tied to increasing agricultural output, rather than to the goal of increasing the structural integration of women into the agricultural labour force. Quite simply, more women were needed during periodic agriculture drives when existing labour supply was strained.

An interesting exception to the suggested relationship between agricultural output and female mobilization is the participation of women in agriculture in North and Northeast China, areas with fewer busy seasons and less labour-intensive agriculture (wheat vs. rice produce). The participation rate here was, nevertheless, significantly high; in North China it was reported at over 80 percent during the rehabilitation period (Thorborg, 1978:576; Table 4). Even allowing for over-reporting and the pre-liberation presence of the CCP, this is quite a dramatic increase over Buck's comparable figure of 28 percent (1956:372, Table 9). The explanation suggested by Thorborg is that, as men were being increasingly drawn into the burgeoning industrial labour force in the North and Northeast, female labour was increasingly being allocated as a

substitute in agricultural production.³⁰

There is, unfortunately, little data available in quantitative form on the type of agricultural tasks women performed. Historical accounts are available which offer some suggestive descriptions of the traditionalism in task allocation which persisted. One of the major problems experienced by women in their entrance into production was the low level and narrow range of agricultural skills they possessed. Many women had been involved in only particular tasks in the past--such as weeding, hoeing and harvesting. Very few, for example, had been taught how to plough.

Even in the intensively cultivated and irrigated areas of the south and southwest where women routinely participated in agricultural work, their experience was usually limited to certain specialized kinds of work and "secondary" tasks (Johnson, 1976:150).

Particular state-sponsored campaigns of a labour-intensive nature, such as flood control and land reclamation, were also an additional means of absorbing female agricultural labour (Andors, 1976 and Thorborg, 1978).

The introduction of the early producer cooperatives, in the form of mutual aid teams, was built around the household unit of production. As Diamond notes, the leadership of these teams was usually composed of male kinsmen, with women belonging to their

³⁰ One of the examples, offered by Thorborg, is a speech by Deng Yingchao, a leader of the Women's Federation. Deng referred to the 1951 mobilization of "hundreds of thousands" of women in the Northeast, which enabled the release of one hundred thousand men from agricultural activities (1978:587). This ratio of replacement is taken to indicate a reduced number of actual working days for female labourers.

3

fathers' team, until marriage transferred them to their husbands' unit (1975:378). The organization of their labour within these teams was usually according to male guidance (husband or father) and directed toward traditional sectors. Exceptions were found with the organization of all-female mutual aid teams, an arrangement necessary to reduce the conservative reaction against unrelated men and women working too closely together (Davin, 1976:147). Popular in nonagricultural light textile manufacture, these teams were usually based on at-home production. This was particularly suitable to the underdevelopment of child-care facilities in this period, enabling the woman to both care for her children and contribute to social production.

One of the more obvious areas of sex differences in mutual aid team organization was the assignment of work points, the basis of remuneration for work. Based on the number of working days contributed by each member of the team, the distribution of work points favoured males over females in several ways. First, there was an inherent bias toward the over-valuation of physical strength in awarding workpoints (Hoffmann, 1967). Given that women tended to be located in tasks requiring less physical capacity, they were necessarily restricted in their earning-potential. Second, there was a common tendency in this period to merely include the workpoints of a woman into the total allocated to her husband or father, thereby decreasing her own control over her earnings (Davin, 1976:141). This problem was directly linked to male kinship-based control over these work teams. Finally, there was a general tendency to undervalue the

working day of a women compared to that of a male. While ten work-points was the common assignment for one day of work, women normally received five or six (Davin, 1976:143).

The involvement of peasant households in mutual aid production had reached as noted earlier, a 40 percent level of participation by 1952. For the 60 percent of peasant households who remained outside of these early cooperative arrangements remuneration for work was carried on under traditional practices. In other words, the individual household was the unit of accumulation and appropriation, and individual labour contributions were not separately tabulated or rewarded. The control exercised by women over agricultural surplus was, in all probability, very meager given the overall difficulty women had during this period in securing recognition of their right to family property.³¹

The pattern of economic growth exhibited in nonagricultural branches of the economy included an increased investment in heavy industry, an expansion of the nonagricultural labour force, particularly the state sphere, a rapid growth in the industrial labour force and an increased contribution of industrial output to the overall economic performance. While the traditional sectors of the nonagricultural economy still employed the highest number of persons, the modern branches, composed of workers and employees, had a significantly higher rate of growth. The extent and conditions of

³¹ See summary of investigation reports on the access of married women to family property in Meijer, 1971:Chapter 7.

the integration of women into the expanding nonagricultural labour force are thus of considerable interest.

Official estimates suggested the number of female workers and employees was 600,000 in 1949, and increased to over 1.8 million by 1952 (see Table 10).³² This represents an increase from 7.5 percent of total workers and employees in 1949 to 11.8 percent in 1952. It is evident that the bulk of women in nonagricultural employment were found in the more traditional branches: for example, this category constituted 4.7 million of the total 6.6 million women working 1952. Within the traditional branches, handicrafts was the largest source of labour for women, employing almost 43 percent of women working in traditional branches in 1952 (based on calculations in Table 10). The type of work these women engaged in was largely based on the traditional female skills of needlework, weaving and embroidery, and they represented almost 28 percent of the total labour in handicraft production in 1952.³³

The other major employer of women in traditional branches was the 'services' sector. The data in this category cannot, Hou admits, be judged as highly accurate; they represent only rough estimates

³² Emerson (1965b:19; cf 13) disputes the 1949 figure, based on his calculations of 460,000 women in textiles and 175,000 in education, cultural affairs, and medicine and public health in that year. It is clear from his figures that there was underreporting in 1949, probably due to inadequate statistical facilities.

³³ This percentage was calculated using Hou's figures for nonagricultural employment by branch for 1952 (1968:356-57; Table 10). There is very little disagreement on totals between the estimates of Hou and those of Emerson presented here in Table 8.

Table 10: Nonagricultural Employment: Female, 1949-52 (in thousands)

	1949	1950	1951	1952
Total	4,836	5,882	6,006	6,587
<u>Workers and Employees</u>	600	1,224	1,224	1,848
<u>Nonworkers and employees:</u> ¹	4,236	4,658	4,782	4,739
i. Handicrafts	1,604	1,981	1,989	2,018
ii. Salt Extraction	130	130	130	130
iii. Fishing	80	120	127	134
iv. Transportation: junks	91	91	91	91
v. Trade, Food, Drink	831	836	945	866
vi. Personal and Professional Service	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500

SOURCE: Hou, 1968:371; Table 18.

¹ Employment category used to distinguish those persons working in traditional sectors of nonagricultural economy, outside of state sector employment.

(1968:391). He includes in this sector domestic work, laundry services, tourist services, traditional medicine and a variety of other service occupations. Based on Hou's total estimate of over 3.2 million persons in this category, women constitute 46 percent.

The highest proportion of female workers and employees in the modern sector was found in textiles manufacture, where 460,000 women were employed in 1949 (Emerson, 1965b:19, cf 13), or almost 77 percent of all female workers and employees.³⁴ As a proportion of the textile labour force, women constituted 60 percent of the workers (Emerson, 1965b:19). When one compares this with the pre-liberation figures presented in Chapter V, the persistence of female concentration in textiles is striking. As noted, women comprised 47 to 65 percent of workers in textile factories between 1914 and 1920 (Johnson, 1976:23). However the role of women in the total industrial labour force was not comparable; their earlier dominance was rapidly being superseded by male entrance into industry. In addition, their presence in textiles must be assessed in light of the rates of growth and state investment in this sector relative to other industries. As argued earlier, the attention to, and contribution of textiles was declining relative to other industrial spheres.

The integration of women into the expanding nonagricultural labour force did not in any sense change the structural composition

³⁴ Based on Emerson's caution of underreporting in 1949, this percentage could conceivably be lower; although the indicated high concentration of women in this sector would still hold.

of female labour. As shown in Table 11, the proportion of women in nonagricultural labour remained between 17 and 19 percent throughout this period. The reduction in their proportion between 1950 and 1951 is partial evidence of their decline relative to male employment. When one narrows nonagricultural employment to only workers and employees, the proportion of women to men is even lower, fluctuating between 7 and 12 percent (see Table 11). Again, there is a noticeable decrease in female ratio between 1950 and 1951, indicating a pattern of increased opportunities for males in the modern sphere as opposed to females.

For workers and employees, who received wages and salaries in return for their labour, the persistence of inter-sectoral differences led to significant income differentials. Within industry, for example, the textiles sector was the major employer of women, and tended to have lower annual wages than the other leading industrial sectors (see Table 12). Given the state's policy on wage differentials, discussed earlier in the chapter, such gaps are not surprising. Even wider gaps existed within industrial enterprises between scientific and technical personnel, and ordinary workers and staff in the modern sphere (Howe, 1973:35-44). While useful as an incentive in drawing educated and skilled labour to that sector, the maintenance of differentials for this type of employment did little to advance the income of women, given their virtual non-existence in these positions (Cheng, 1967:537-39).

In conclusion, the nonagricultural participation of women during the rehabilitation period is characterized by several apparent

Table 11: Female Nonagricultural Employment as
Percentage of Total and of Workers and
Employees, 1949-52.

	1949	1950	1951	1952
Total Nonagricultural Employment (thousands)	26,267	30,314	34,730	36,752
Female Nonagricultural Employment (thousands)	4,836	5,882	6,006	6,587
Female as % of Total	18.4	19.4	17.3	17.9
Total Workers and Employees (thousands)	7,977	10,166	12,705	15,656
Female Workers and Employees (thousands)	600	1,224	1,224	1,848
Female as % of Total	7.5	12.0	9.6	11.8

SOURCES: Line 1 and 4 derived from Table 8.

Line 2 and 5 derived from Table 10.

Table 12: Inter-industry Structure of Wages,
1950 and 1952 (annual average wages
per worker in yuan).

	1950	1952
Electricity	455	800
Coal	468	810
Textiles	455	560
Machinery	477	586
Iron and steel	— ¹	587.4

SOURCE: Howe, 1973:43, Table 28.

¹ (—) indicates data not available.

trends. First, the majority were found in traditional branches of the economy doing work premised on traditional female skills. Found in handicraft and services sectors, women occupied jobs which tended to be more vulnerable than those in the modern sector to the fluctuations of the market and of state policy at the time. As noted earlier, handicraft production was not a 'growth sector' compared to industrial production, and it operated largely through private rather than state capital. The largest increases in nonagricultural employment, however, were found in the expanding state sector.

Second, even within the modern sphere of employment, women tended to be concentrated in one dominant sector, that of textiles. The importance of consumer goods production continued throughout this period but the shifting emphasis of the state towards producer goods, a sector where women did not participate to any significant degree, was increasingly apparent. This can be seen in both capital investment by the state and in allocated wages.

Finally, it could be argued that participation opportunities for women were found in labour-intensive as opposed to the more capital-intensive sectors in both the modern and traditional branches.

3. The Domestic Sphere

Little quantitative evidence is available on the labour of women in the household sphere. This is not surprising for this period, given the more obvious need to focus attention on the sphere of social production. What is fairly clear from historical accounts

of this time is that the state was not in any position as yet to launch a socialization program for household labour. Little attention seems to have been devoted to the management of household production-for-use or the balancing of social labour with childcare responsibilities. The overriding theme in speeches and documents of the Women's Federation was the need to contribute to increasing the social productivity of the society. The emphasis on social responsibility to engage in the productivity campaign was so strong, it became the criterion for judging women:

In official literature individual women were evaluated in terms of their contribution to society at large, and when they were praised for their role in the family it was usually for their success in combining it with an outside job (Davin, 1976:108).

The support structures available to assist women in entering production began to emerge in this period, but only on a limited context. In the rural areas, where labour demands on women were higher and subject to seasonal fluctuation, childcare facilities increased from 14,000 units to 148,200 between 1951 and 1952, involving the care of 850,000 children (Thorborg, 1978:507). These were generally temporary arrangements, popular during harvest season when labour demands were the highest. Other ad hoc arrangements existed in rural areas such as employing neighbours to care for one's children when female relatives were absent. Interestingly, Davin notes that the payment for this service was sometimes arranged as a proportion of the mother's income, indicating a social recognition of where responsibility was allocated (1976:126).

The availability of childcare centres in urban areas appears to have been fairly limited in the early fifties. Some nurseries were organized in large-scale factories, especially textiles factories, to allow women to organize their dual responsibilities. Also, unemployed urban housewives sometimes offered childcare facilities in return for a fee. For the most part, however, the number of facilities was inadequate and women tended to seek relief by calling on relatives for assistance.³⁵ A possible interpretation of the lack of adequate facilities is the relatively weaker demand for female labour in the urban areas. Where demand was significantly higher, as in labour-intensive agricultural sectors, the structural support systems tended to emerge more quickly and in greater numbers.

The debate on birth control did not really get underway in the rehabilitation period, and when the subject was brought up it usually sparked negative comment. In a 1952 article in the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), birth control was rejected as "a means of killing the Chinese people without shedding blood" (quoted in Croll, 1978:246). The expanding labour force in rural and urban areas, combined with a view of labour power as an important force in production, consolidated an approach to birth control education as

³⁵ Descriptions of various urban arrangements can be found in Croll, 1978:247-49.

an unnecessary course of direction for the state to undertake.³⁶ The state at the time was more concerned with improving the quality of pre-natal and post-natal care. So, for example, the number of beds in maternity hospitals increased between 1949 and 1952 from 1,762 to 4,052, and health stations for women and children rose from 9 to 2,379 (State Statistical Bureau, 1960:221). Sanitation and hygiene information campaigns were also launched in order to improve the health conditions in the home.

D. Conclusion

The preceding discussion of the early years of the People's Republic of China has suggested several apparent themes in the analysis of the inter-relationship of material conditions and sex subordination. While mindful of the limitations of the data from this period, it is possible to consider the patterns which were beginning to emerge, both in state policy and in the social roles of women.

First, there is no question that the new state remained committed in policy to the Yanan emphasis on liberating women through mobilization for production. This was the paramount theme in all references to women in this period, including marriage reform

³⁶ The unreliability of data on recorded births is a problem for this period. The pre-revolutionary crude birth rate of 38.3 (births per thousand) noted by Buch (1956:382) is, nevertheless, comparable to the 1952 rate of 37.0 suggested by Aird (1967:355). The former rate, Buck also cautions, may have been inflated due to a long period of social-economic stability in the early part of the century.

policies. The context of the latter was explicitly set as an attack against the feudal family system which placed restraints on productivity. As a consequence, reforms which might specifically redress the inequalities between husband and wife were discouraged, in the event that they might de-stabilize the household productive unit. In both agrarian and nonagrarian production, women were encouraged to make their contribution to rebuilding the economic infrastructure of the new society.

The second apparent pattern drawn from the historical review concerns the manner in which women made their contribution to production. The evidence available indicates the reproduction of a sexual division of labour by economic branch and sector. Women did not enter the modern, nonagricultural branch to the same extent men did, and when they did, they were overwhelmingly concentrated in the textiles sector of industry. In the traditional branch of nonagricultural labour, they remained concentrated in handicrafts and service occupations. In agricultural work, the participation rate of women rose; but it did so more for seasonal entrance rather than permanent integration. There are also indications that women were transferred to agriculture in order to replace men moving into the industrial sector, especially in the North and Northeast.

Third, the context of female entrance into production is particularly interesting when it is examined in light of the overall economic policies of the state. In agriculture, the combination of land reform and labour mobilization created a demand for more intensive use of female labour in the context of household-based

agricultural production. With limited capital to invest, the new state attempted to launch its economic recovery in agriculture by utilizing labour power resources. Thus, institutional reorganization of agriculture, through land redistribution, mutual aid teams and labour mobilization, accomplished what capital could not provide. In the nonagricultural sphere the rising modern branch and, in particular heavy industry, were singled out for capital investment and expansion of the labour force. The prevalence of women in the modern branch was limited, however, to light industry which tended toward labour-intensive organization. As a result, the pre-revolutionary dominance of women in the industrial labour force was beginning to decline with the changing mix of industry. Their early dominance was in the context of an economy where the industrial sector was very small, and agricultural and traditional nonagricultural occupations were the most crucial sectors for the state. In the early years of the new regime, the relative decline of light industry, engaged largely in consumer goods production, was beginning to be felt against the rise in heavy, producer-goods industry. Consequently, the industrial participation of women was concentrated in a more vulnerable sector, in terms of opportunities for growth. The decline in light industry was only beginning to emerge, however, in this period; it was to appear more sharply in the following years.

Finally, the maintenance of the household as the independent unit of production was reflected both in agricultural organization and domestic labour. Traditional sex-divided tasks were usually the

basis upon which mutual aid teams were organized. At the same time, domestic labour in the form of meal preparation, childcare, sewing, etc., provided necessary labour which the state was in no financial position to socialize. Where the conflict between female social and domestic labour became particularly acute, during harvest season for example, structural supports were temporarily provided. Otherwise it was left to the individual woman to manage her joint responsibilities efficiently. It is noteworthy, however, that the relatively high level of consumer goods production, still present in the early years, relieved some of the pressure on household production-for-use.

As indicated earlier in the discussion, it would be unwise to generalize too strongly about the patterns found to be present during the period of rehabilitation. Collectivization policies in agriculture and industry were just beginning to take hold and the state's most urgent task was to restore and revitalize its economic base. Nevertheless the manner in which women figured in that restoration process is instructive. The key to their liberation, women were promised, was social labour. Yet the context of that labour, in the sense of the implications it had for wages, control, permanence of participation or household duties, was never addressed. As a result, the reproduction of a sexual division of labour in production and in the household occurred with little comment from either the Chinese Communist Party, or the Women's Federation. The impact of this initial approach to the labour of woman was felt beyond the end of the recovery period. In the following chapter, I examine the interplay of material conditions and the sexual division

of labour in the context of the First Five Year Plan period. The extent to which the social roles of women were altered under the full-scale socialization of the economy is the focus of discussion in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN: 1953-57

A. Introduction: Broad Objectives

By 1953 the completion of land reform and economic recovery had reached a point where it was now possible for the state to begin long-range planning for development.¹ The development plan, which was eventually adopted in 1955 at the Second Session of the First National Congress, was officially announced in early 1953. For the first two and one-half years, it was composed more of broad objectives and annual programs than comprehensive, detailed categories. Nevertheless, by July, 1955 when the First Five-Year Plan was finally passed through the National People's Congress, the components of the state's choice of direction had already begun to crystallize around particular objectives. Closely modelled on the Soviet development experience under Stalin, the Plan led to policies and priorities designed to bring China rapidly into the 'industrial era.' It was also critical in creating debate within the Chinese Communist Party over the chosen development objectives, and by late 1957 it was effectively withdrawn by its critics in favour of an alternative approach. Before turning to more specific discussion of policies and consequences of the Five-Year Plan, it is useful to

¹ The possibility for long-range economic planning was further enhanced by the conclusion of the Korean War, a dispute which had drained resources away from allocations for development.

first consider its essential elements.²

The first and primary feature of the Plan is its emphasis on high economic growth, achieved through an increase in gross output. This objective is directly tied to the second goal of expanding industrial output, with particular emphasis on capital-intensive, large-scale, heavy industries. A third feature of the Plan, inter-related with the second, is its commitment to allocating state capital investment to heavy industry more than to other nonagricultural or agricultural enterprises.

Fourth, agricultural policy was designed to extend the collectivization campaign, introduced minimally through the early mutual aid teams. Beginning slowly, and then rapidly expanding in late 1955 and 1956, it was assumed that collectivization would engender the institutional transformation necessary to ensure both more centralized control over agricultural production and an increased agricultural output. The state's view was clearly that agriculture was the 'poor cousin' in the allocation of scarce resources. As Eckstein notes:

In effect, it was hoped that the organization and restructuring of farm institutions and production forms could substitute for increasing industrial inputs in agriculture (1977:51).

Finally, the above objectives were combined with an emphasis on both highly centralized planning and control structures and

² A key document outlining the central objectives of the Plan is Li Fu-chun's report to the National People's Congress in 1955. It is translated in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962. Useful secondary commentaries on the essence of the Plan are available in Eckstein, 1977; Ashbrook, 1967; Walker, 1968 and Chesneaux, 1979. Other Plan directives can be found in Chao, 1959.

reliance on professional and technical expertise. In the case of the latter, material incentives were encouraged as a mechanism for increasing the supply of such labour while, at the same time, expanding the educational facilities available to disperse these skills.

In summary, the thrust of the state in devising the Five-Year Plan, was that industrial performance was the foundation of economic growth and the key to building socialism. The 'spread effect' of successes in industry would allow growth in agriculture to take place. The technical modernization of agriculture, however, could not precede the modernization and expansion of industry; consequently reorganization of management and labour allocation in agriculture was substituted. The intentions of the state are clearly stated by Li Fu-chun, Chairman of the State Planning Commission, in his report to the People's Congress in 1955:³

Socialist industrialization is the keystone for building socialism in our country; the socialist transformation of agriculture and handicrafts, and capitalist industry and commerce are two essential elements in this undertaking. The three are inseparable.

Large-scale industry provides the material basis for the building of a socialist society. Lenin always taught us: 'The real and only basis upon which we could consolidate our resources for the creation of socialist society is large-scale industry.' (translated in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:46).

³ The full title of this document is "Report on the First Five-Year Plan for Development of the National Economy of the People's Republic of China in 1953-57. Bowie and Fairbank's source is the officially-released translation, issued as a pamphlet in October, 1955.

B. Policies and Performance

1. The Industrial Sector

Central to the state's goals in industrial expansion and accumulation, was the need to bring the industrial sector under more direct supervision and thereby reduce the remaining control of private capitalists over industrial output. The toleration of the co-existence of socialist and capitalist industry was no longer feasible and the state took measures to eradicate this pattern. According to Li,

Some people harbour the hope that socialist and capitalist economy can go on existing side-by-side in the country over a protracted period, that socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce will not be carried out, or at least will not be carried out just at present. We (also) consider this way of thinking wrong. It is impossible for socialism and capitalism, whose systems of productive relations are anti-thetical, to develop alongside each other in a country without mutual interference. We can take either the path of socialism, or the path of capitalism; but the Chinese people will never allow the latter path to be taken (translated in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:48).

The socialist transformation of private industry continued at a steady but gradual pace until 1956, when the pace of socialization considerably accelerated. This took the form of organizing entire trades under state ownership, rather than proceeding on an individual enterprise basis. In addition, state capitalist industry took the form solely of joint state-private ownership, excluding the category of private firms operating under state guidance and direction. The production arrangements of jointly-owned enterprises were managed in essentially the same manner as socialist, or state-owned industry,

with the exception that private shares in joint enterprises were entitled to a fixed interest payment, usually 5 percent per annum.⁴ The success of the socialization drive in industry can be demonstrated in Table 13; over two-thirds of industry was directly state-owned and the remainder was controlled under joint state-private ownership arrangements. The leverage gained by the state in this process was in the context of rationalized and unified production arrangements on a much wider scale, in addition to the increased accumulation for the state. By setting a fixed percentage of interest to private owners (which was considerably less than the 25 percent profit margin they received under the rehabilitation period) the surplus profits were directed to the state for re-investment.

In the traditional branch of the nonagricultural economy, collectivization was also encouraged for handicrafts manufacture. Here it took the form of cooperatives for both production and marketing processes. Again, this cooperative movement was sharply accelerated in the "high tide" of 1956, as Table 14 demonstrates, when literally millions were re-located into cooperative arrangements. The drop in total numbers of persons involved was due, according to the State Statistical Bureau, to the entrance of some urban individuals into industrial enterprises and rural individuals

⁴ See 'Directive on questions in the socialist transformation of private industry, commerce, handicrafts and, transport,' July 28, 1956. It is translated in Chao Kuo-Chun, 1959:21-29.

Table 13: Socialization of Industry: Percentage Distribution of Industrial Gross Output (excluding handicrafts), 1953-56.

Year	State Industry	Joint State-Capitalist Industry	of which:		Private Industry
			Joint State-Private Industry	Private Industries with State Guidance	
1953	57.5	28.5	5.7	22.8	14.0
1954	62.8	31.9	12.3	19.6	5.3
1955	67.7	29.3	16.1	13.2	3.0
1956	67.5	32.5	32.5	—	—

SOURCE: State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:38.

Table 14: The Cooperative Movement in Handicrafts
1952-56

Year	Total	Number of persons (in thousands)		Percentage Distribution	
		Cooperative Handicrafts	Individual Handicrafts	Cooperative Handicrafts	Individual Handicrafts
1952	7,364	228	7,136	3.1	96.9
1953	7,789	301	7,488	3.9	96.1
1954	8,910	1,213	7,697	13.6	86.4
1955	8,202	2,206	5,996	26.9	73.1
1956	6,583	6,039	544	91.7	8.3

SOURCE: State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:36.

into agricultural cooperatives (1960:36cf).

The encouragement of institutional arrangements in handicrafts was premised on the argument that collective production processes would provide a stronger basis for increasing the gross output of handicraft manufacture than individual or household-based production. Coupled with this was the recognition of the low rate of labour productivity in traditional, individual handicrafts when compared to cooperative handicrafts, and even more so when compared to mechanized production. According to Mao in 1956:

The highest labour productivity in mechanized and semi-mechanized production is over thirty times the lowest in handicraft production. The annual value of output per capita is 20,000 to 30,000 yuan in modernized state industry, 5,000 yuan in mechanized cooperatives, 2,000 yuan in big cooperatives with more than 100 handicraftsmen, 1,500 yuan in small cooperatives and 800 to 900 yuan among independent handicraftsmen (translated in Selden, 1979:307).

The strategy was, therefore, to rapidly introduce extensive cooperatives arrangements which would encourage collective (rather than state) investment in the sector and facilitate increased output.

The fixed investment of the state during this period reflected several patterns. The most striking feature of state investment is the increasing proportion allocated to industry, while investment in agriculture stabilized at 22 to 23 percent of the total investment (compared to 31 percent in 1950). In Table 15 the main trends in sector allocations of gross fixed investment are given, demonstrating an increasing priority to heavy industry over light industry, and a decline in the allocation to services and

Table 15: Sector Shares of Gross Fixed Investment (in percent), 1953-57

Sector	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957
Agriculture	20.7	22.4	24.5	22.8	23.0
Industry, construction and public utilities	33.0	34.4	34.3	37.8	41.3
Heavy Industry	17.1	20.2	24.6	26.2	29.2
Light Industry	10.2	8.2	4.0	4.6	5.7
Transportation and Communications	9.4	11.0	13.8	13.8	12.6
Residential Construction	10.2	9.5	10.5	8.4	9.7
Service and trade	26.5	22.8	16.8	17.0	13.4
Total Fixed Investment ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Hollister, 1967:128, Table 4.

¹ Subtotals do not always equal 100.0 because of rounding.

trade. It should be noted that these figures represent all forms of investment (state, cooperative and private). Data released by the State Statistical Bureau regarding state fixed investment only, reflect a much higher priority to industry over agriculture. In 1957, for example, industry received 52.3 percent of total state investment, compared to 8.6 percent for agriculture, and within industry allocations, 84.8 percent went to heavy industry and 15.2 percent to light industry (State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:59,61). As Hollister notes, the pattern of investment in light industry represents an attempt to keep capital allotments to industries like textiles and food processing at a minimum, while at the same time meeting the demand for processing of agricultural raw material (1967:131).

The pattern of industrial growth during the Five-Year Plan reflected the priorities developed by the state. The channelling of investment into industry led to an average annual growth rate of 16 percent compared to 7 percent for handicrafts (Field, 1967:273; Table 2).⁵ Within industry, variable growth rates ranged from a low of 9 percent for textiles to 31 percent for ferrous metals, reflecting a pattern which emphasized heavy industry over light industry. Overall there was a definite structural shift toward producer goods production over consumer goods. In 1952, industrial

⁵ Field notes that the higher rates of overall growth for industrial production during the period of rehabilitation (averaging 35 percent), reflect the restoration of order to the ravaged industrial infrastructure, rather than a retrenchment in industrial expansion during the Plan period (1967:275).

production was constituted by 35 percent producer goods and 65 percent consumer goods; by 1957 this had shifted to 48 percent producer goods and 52 percent consumer goods (Eckstein, 1977:215; Table 6-3).

The location of industry, especially the high-growth sector of heavy industry, was still inclined toward urban areas in coastal centres. The state's policy toward industry in rural areas reflected an emphasis on small-scale enterprises oriented to production for the rural population in terms of both products necessary for agricultural production, and a range of consumer goods. These 'local industries' were based largely on labour-intensive production processes and usually were managed through provincial, county and district authorities rather than direct state intervention. In addition, their resources for production were severely limited given the priority in allocation:

It was central to the proper implementation of these principles that local industry should not compete for resources with the Centre, but limit itself to surplus and waste materials as well as to those completely unsuitable for central use (Riskin, 1971:247).

The lower priority to small-scale and local industry is also reflected in the proportion of overall industrial investment it received. According to Riskin, large-scale industries controlled centrally by the state received about 68 percent of total industrial investment, allowing 32 percent for local industry (1971:251). Not surprisingly, then, the gross value output of large-scale enterprises grew more rapidly at 21 percent per annum between 1952 and 1955 compared to 9 percent for small-scale industries (1971:250). The

efficacy of the state's local industry policy was to become a serious point of division near the end of the Plan period, as state planners became aware of its inability to provide agriculture with the necessary industrial inputs to increase output. The bulk of local industry production went toward processing materials for central, large-scale industries or generating a range of consumer goods; it did not contribute significantly to the inadequately-supplied agricultural producer goods sector. Riskin estimates that this production constituted only 4 percent of the gross value of local industrial production, and even then, it was primarily concentrated away from agricultural markets in large scale and medium-size urban areas (1971:253).

The wage policies of this period were, until 1955, a continuation of rehabilitation policies which endorsed material incentives as a means to encourage productivity. There was not, however, a nationally-unified structure for organizing wage indexes, and regional inter-industry differentials were prevalent. Beginning in 1955, the state introduced a series of wage reforms, initially with state administrative employees and later extended to the industrial sector, designed to unify wages and salaries of state employees.⁶ The 1956 wage reform policy, which extended the national wage standards to industry, was premised on three objectives: increasing differentials between managerial and technical employees,

⁶ A useful account of the evolution of wage policies throughout the early to late 1950s can be found in Howe, 1973:84-96 and Hoffman, 1967:474-477.

and skilled workers; increasing equalization among managers and higher incentives for managers over technical employees; and increasing differentials within skilled worker categories (Howe, 1973:89). The underlying rationale for the policy was to use wages as an instrument for increasing productivity in key sectors and encouraging an effective allocation of labour resources to targeted sectors.⁷

In describing how this wage reform would be implemented in Northeast China in 1956, a party official noted:

Workers at the iron and steel smelting works, whose job is arduous, who need a high degree of skill, and who work in industry which plays an important part in the development of the national economy, will be on a wage scale rising from 34.5 yuan in the lowest grade to 110.4 yuan in the highest. That is, wages in the highest grade are 3.2 times as high as the lowest. In a cigarette factory in the same region--that is, in an industry that calls for less skill, in which work is less arduous and which is less important to the development of the national economy--the scale rises from 28.5 yuan to 71.3 yuan, the highest grade getting two and a half times as much as the lowest. . . the highest wage a director chief engineer of a first-class iron and steel-smelting plant can get is 229 yuan. The upper limit for a director or chief engineer of a first-class cigarette factory is 202 yuan (Liu Tzu-chiu, translated in Selden, 1979:313).⁸

The effects of the 1956 wage reform were felt on several levels. Between 1953 and 1955, the state had managed to keep a

⁷ Associated with policies of Liu Shaoqui, this approach to using material incentives to induce productivity was later attacked by Mao and others as 'counter revolutionary.' Howe, however, argues that the policy was more associated with Zhou En-lai's attempt to bring intellectuals and scientists more fully into the Plan's objectives, and was supported by Mao himself (1971:90).

⁸ Wage cited refer to a monthly wage.

fairly tight control over wage increases, although there had been some sharp increases in the early years of the rehabilitation period. In 1956, there was a significant jump in wages, averaging a 14 percent increase over the previous year (see Table 16). The inflationary pressures of this increase in a context of a limited consumer good market and a stagnating agricultural sector, combined to force a retrenchment in wage reform by the end of the Plan period. Workers in state factories had begun to demand higher wages to cope with the inflated cost of living, and the state was faced with rising labour costs which reduced the rate of accumulation possible for the state. The response of the state was to freeze wage increases in 1957 and to introduce more strict control over labour grievances among the workers (Howe, 1971:94-95).

There was also the problem of increasing differentials between agricultural and industrial income and, more generally, between rural and urban incomes.⁹ Howe cites a survey of Jiangsu province in 1957, which indicated the wage rate of the lowest grade construction worker to be 46 percent higher than the income of a male working in the wealthiest cooperatives of the province (1971:51). Schran refers to a 1955 survey in Liaoning Province of peasant cooperative households, where average annual compensation was a maximum 373 yuan, based on over 201 male labour days (1969:163; Table 6.5). When this is compared with the average annual wage of all

⁹ Direct comparisons are difficult given the different structures of payment. Agricultural income includes, for example, real money income and the market value of goods produced for household consumption.

Table 16: Money Wages of Workers and Staff, 1949-56
(annual average wage in yuan).

	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957
Wage	262	322	379	446	496	519	534	610	637
Index	100	123	145	170	189	198	204	233	243
% change on previous quoted year		23	18	18	11	5	3	14	4

SOURCE: Howe, 1971:31; Table 17.

workers and employees for 1955, 534 yuan, the attraction employment in the modern nonagricultural branch might have over agricultural work is apparent.

This attraction for nonagricultural employment, specifically industrial work in urban centres, was induced by the 1956 wage policy and the overall focus of the Plan on industrial expansion. The result was a sharp increase in a rural-urban migration, and a squeeze on the urban labour market, when labour supply quickly outdistanced labour absorption rates.

The growth of the urban population between 1953 and 1957 has been estimated at almost 40 percent, averaging an annual growth rate of 7 percent. Average annual natural increase rates accounted for at least 3 percent of the overall increase, leaving the remainder of the increase to rural-urban migration (Emerson, 1967:418). The significantly higher rate of growth for urban areas over rural areas is demonstrated in Table 17. The contraction in growth rates for 1954 and 1955 reflects the attempts of the state to deal with what was perceived as a growing crisis in urban unemployment. Although accurate data of the urban unemployment situation are difficult to obtain,¹⁰ attempts to reconstruct estimates for this period agree that the problem had reached crisis proportions by 1956 (see for example, Liu and Yeh, 1965:102-3; Emerson, 1967:418-421 and Howe, 1971:63-73).

¹⁰ As Howe notes, official data were based on unemployment 'registers', which consistently under-reported, and surveys which neglected to cover either workers in traditional sectors or women who were discouraged from entering the urban labour market (1971:31).

Table 17: Rate of Growth in the Population by Urban and Rural Residence, 1953-56 (percentage increases during year).

	Total	Urban	Rural
1953	2.29	8.43	1.41
1954	2.34	4.99	1.94
1955	2.14	1.59	2.24
1956	2.14	7.60	1.29

SOURCE: Aird, 1967:353; Table 1.

The rough estimates used by Emerson for this period suggest that urban unemployment was increasing by at least 400,000 persons per year (1967:419).¹¹ The mechanisms used by the state to control the influx of migrants varied from restrictions on new hiring in public sector employment in 1955, which added to the unemployment problem, to sporadic campaigns to return urban immigrants to the countryside. But a recurrent problem faced by the state was the inability to cope with the oversupply of urban labour by increasing the economy's capacity to absorb labour. Employment emphasis in heavy industrial sectors did not significantly increase the amount of labour used, given its capital-intensive nature. Moreover, the absence of incentives for rural employment did not make it a feasible option for a squeezed urban market. The emigration to the countryside encouraged by the state in 1955, had subsided by late 1956, based partially on the poor harvest of 1956, but also on dissatisfaction with the cooperative movement in agricultural areas (Howe, 1971:121-22).

The structure of employment in nonagricultural occupations during the Five-Year Plan is given in Table 18. During this period, overall nonagricultural employment increased by only about 7.9 percent above 1952, averaging only 1.5 percent annually (Emerson, 1967:438). Certain patterns, related to the overall economic priorities of the period, are apparent from Table 18. The increasing importance of the modern sector was reflected in the displacement of the traditional sector as the more important area for nonagricultural

¹¹ Given that his data are based on only 'workers and employees' the actual figures of unemployed are possibly much higher.

Table 18: Nonagricultural Employment by Branch of the Economy
and Modern and Traditional Components, 1953-57
(in thousands).

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Branch of economy and component	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957
<u>Modern</u>					
Total	18,069	18,588	18,861	23,939	23,921
Material Production Branches	12,172	12,701	12,852	17,203	17,280
Industry	6,121	6,370	6,121	7,480	7,907
Water conservation	198	266	261	409	340
Capital construction	2,170	2,100	1,935	2,951	1,910
Transport, posts and telecommunications	1,238	1,347	1,426	1,564	1,878
Trade, and the food and drink industry	2,445	2,618	3,109	4,799	5,245
Nonproductive Branches	5,897	5,887	6,009	6,736	6,641
Finance, banking and insurance	377	384	384	417	400
Education, medicine and cultural affairs	2,607	2,715	2,824	3,211	3,211
Government administration	1,698	1,598	1,576	1,748	1,698
Mass organizations	1,143	1,090	1,096	1,215	1,184
Urban public utilities	69	96	123	133	133
Meterology	3	4	6	12	15
<u>Traditional</u>					
Total	21,047	21,162	20,003	15,427	15,746
Material Production Branches	19,782	19,609	18,406	13,605	13,673
Handicraft	7,789	8,910	8,202	5,780	6,560
Salt extraction	500	500	500	500	500
Fishing	1,404	1,472	1,540	1,500	1,500
Transport, post and telecommunications	3,526	3,526	3,450	2,539	2,539
Trade, and the food and drink industry	6,563	5,201	4,714	3,286	2,574
Nonproductive branches	1,265	1,553	1,597	1,822	2,073
Finance	19	248	320	260	221
Services	452	461	470	479	489
Traditional Medicine	794	844	807	1,083	1,363

SOURCE: Emerson, 1967:464; Table A-4.

employment; by 1957, 8 million more jobs were found in the modern sector over the traditional sector. The declining number of jobs in the traditional sector was found to be particularly sharp in the handicraft, and trade, food and drink sectors. The latter decline was balanced out by the socialization of this sector into the modern sphere; so while there was no absolute growth in employment, the reduction is not as high as suggested in Table 18. The declining employment in traditional handicrafts was not, however, compensated by direct re-allocation; while some may have gone to factory manufacture or agriculture cooperatives, the mechanisms for absorption of displaced labour were very weak. In fact when one compares the declining number engaged in traditional material production as given in Table 18, it is apparent that there was a net decline in the number of persons employed in material production. This can be related to the large declines in the private sector brought about by the socialization campaign of 1955-56, which cancelled absolute gains in state sector employment (Emerson, 1967:440).

Growth in industrial employment was uneven during the Plan period, increasing fairly sharply in 1953 and again in late 1956. The distribution of industrial employment between producer and consumer goods industries reflected the overall pattern of state investment. Of the total increase since 1952, of 2.6 million persons engaged in industry, 78 percent went to producer goods industry (Emerson, 1967:444). At the same time the structural composition of the nonagricultural labour force was shifting towards the producer

Table 19: Workers and Employees by Branch of Industry,
1953-57 (percent distribution).

Branch of Industry	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1. Producer and consumer goods industry:					
Producer Goods	52.9	54.9	56.9	59.0	60.0
Consumer Goods	47.1	45.1	43.1	41.0	40.0
2. Heavy industry:					
Electric Power	1.1	1.2	1.6	1.7	1.8
Coal	8.4	8.4	9.2	7.9	8.5
Petroleum	.5	.6	.8	.7	.8
Iron and Steel	4.2	4.2	4.8	4.3	4.4
Nonferrous metals, mining and processing	3.0	3.3	4.3	4.3	4.4
Metal processing	15.3	15.4	15.7	17.9	17.7
Chemical processing	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.9	3.2
Building materials	7.4	7.2	8.2	7.9	7.6
Timber	4.7	4.7	4.6	3.3	4.2
3. Light Industry:					
Papermaking	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2
Textiles	17.6	17.2	19.0	17.1	16.2
Goods Processing ¹	—	—	19.6	16.0	15.2
4. Other ²	34.2	34.1	8.5	14.8	14.8

SOURCE: Emerson, 1967:467; Table A-6.

¹ (—) indicates data not available.

² Emerson has tabulated data only for key selected industries. This category includes all other industrial sectors.

goods industries, while light industries such as textiles and food processing were experiencing a relative decline (see Table 19).

The profile which emerges of the nonagricultural branch of the economy is directly related to the objectives of the state's industrial policies. High economic growth was achieved in industry with variable sector growth rates associated with the type of industrial product manufactured. The overall emphasis, reflected in both capital investment and employment opportunities, was in the producer goods sector of heavy industry. Vulnerable sectors were those located in either the traditional branch, or, within the modern branch, in light industry. The First Five-Year Plan did not bring a significant expansion of the nonagricultural labour force given its emphasis on capital-intensive industry; nevertheless it did engender pressure on the urban labour market. High rural to urban migration, inflated industrial wages, and inequalities between rural and urban income all combined to put pressure on an already strained urban labour force. In this context, the state was forced to implement mechanisms designed to control the supply of nonagricultural labour. In addition, the maintenance costs to the state of nonagricultural urban labour (e.g., housing, labour and medical insurance, consumer goods supply, etc.) were rising with the expanding urban population. In this context, the state was forced to devise mechanisms designed to both control the entrance of labour and the costs of maintaining it.

2. The Agricultural Sector

The success or failure of the state's industrial policy was

integrally related to performance in the agricultural sector. The latter provided the raw materials which formed the basis for most consumer goods production; it provided the necessary goods to maintain the nonagricultural population and secure producer goods imports; it provided a large market for industrial products; and, most significantly, it had the capacity to produce a surplus which could be transferred to the industrial sector in the form of capital investment (Schran, 1969:1-2).

Between 1953 and mid-1955, the state continued its program of gradually introducing mutual aid arrangements into agrarian production; assuming that these elementary forms of cooperative production could be later expanded to higher forms with the technological transformation of agriculture.¹² The state's concern that a household-based peasant economy placed restrictions on the capacity for surplus production and transfer of capital to the state sector, led to an ever-increasing pressure to collectivize agriculture. This first took the form of introducing 'lower state' Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives (APCs), whereby annual net product from agricultural production (minus tax in kind and investment fund share) was divided according to labour contributed by each cooperator household, and land share held by each household.¹³

¹² See the 'Central Committee Decision on Mutual Aid and Cooperation in Agriculture', officially adopted on February 15, 1953, and the 'Central Committee Decision on Development of Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives', officially adopted on December 16, 1953. They are translated in Selden, 1979:332-340.

¹³ Discussion of the differences between lower and higher stage APCs can be found in Eckstein, 1977:69-72; Larsen, 1967:215-217; Walker, 1968:399-402, and Schran, 1969:27-35.

In other words, individual assets were still significant in elementary producer cooperatives. Higher stage, or advanced, APCs which were introduced in 1956 tended to be larger than lower stage APCs and based more on entire villages rather than a group of households. As Schran notes, in the process of transition from elementary to advanced APCs, the former usually became production brigades within the latter (1969:29). Where elementary APCs usually comprised 30 to 50 households, advanced APCs generally included 200 to 300 households (Eckstein, 1977:70). One of the more significant differences with the advanced collective form was the distribution of net product according to labour only. In both elementary and advanced APCs, individuals held collective title to the land of the APC and were allotted small plots and time off from collective production for private subsidiary production. These plots could not exceed 5 percent of the APC cultivated land and their output was usually exchanged in rural markets (Schran, 1969:29).

The extension of agricultural collectives during the Plan period is given in Table 20. It is evident that the peak period for elementary cooperatives was late 1955, whereas advanced cooperatives were rapidly introduced in 1956. By 1957, almost 94 percent of peasant households belonged to advanced producer cooperatives. These campaigns coincide with the increasing concern of the state with lagging agricultural productivity in the face of high projected increases. By mid-1955, it was evident to the state that agricultural output was falling behind anticipated levels, especially in grain and cotton, causing concern for the targeted growth rates in

Table 20: Share of Peasant Households in Cooperative Arrangements in Agriculture, 1953-57 (in percent).

Year	Agricultural Producer Cooperatives		
	Mutual Aid Teams	Lower Stage	Higher Stage
1953	39.3	0.2	negligible
1954	58.3	1.9	negligible
1955 (end of autumn) (year end)	50.7 32.7	14.2 63.3	0.03 4.0
1956 (end of January) (end of July) (year end)	19.7 7.6 3.7	49.6 29.0 8.5	30.7 63.4 87.8
1957	none	negligible	93.5

SOURCE: Eckstein, 1977:71.

industry. Nevertheless, the Party remained divided in terms of acceptable strategies. Liu Shaoqui favoured a gradualist approach to agricultural collectivization which was premised on the growth of heavy industry preceding agricultural transformation. Mao, on the other hand, challenged gradualist strategies and, in his now-famous report to provincial and municipal Party secretaries on July 31, 1955, called for the rapid collectivization of agriculture despite the absence of industrial inputs.¹⁴ As a result state policy wavered on the issue, from temporary suspension of collectivization in early 1955 to rapid transformation of the peasant economy in mid-1956, surpassing even Mao's projections.

The 1956 'socialist upsurge' in the countryside, as it came to be labeled, brought with it its own set of contradictions which were to emerge full-blown in 1958. The National Program for Agricultural Development, drafted by Mao and a series of rural Party leaders in early 1956, was the first serious challenge to the underlying rationale of the Five Year Plan. Based on a significantly 'different vision of the organization of rural production, the Program was adopted by the Supreme State Conference in January 1956, but was effectively suppressed until the Great Leap Forward of 1958-1959.¹⁵ In the interim, the Party leadership

¹⁴ See Mao Zedong, 'On the Question of Agricultural Cooperation' in Selected Readings (1967).

¹⁵ See 'The Draft Program for Agricultural Development in the People's Republic of China, 1956-67', translated in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:119-126.

continued to face a crisis in the agricultural branch in terms of the management of the collective sphere.

One of the more significant contradictions present in this sector was the competition for time and resources between private 'plot' production and collective production. As shown in Table 21, between 1956 and 1957 the proportion of rural income derived from private production increased significantly, reaching one-third of total income in South China. As Eckstein notes, the existence of private plots and rural 'free' markets of exchange were useful to the state in the sense that they contributed a steady supply of vegetable, poultry and pigs to the collective sphere, and they offered strong material incentives to the peasant household by bringing in supplementary income (1977:116). On the other hand, independent agricultural production posed a serious challenge to the collective sphere when competition for agricultural resources and labour threatened to undercut productivity and surplus accumulation of the cooperative. To the peasant household, the private plots were a lucrative mechanism for ensuring a steady cash flow into the household, otherwise dependent on the relative successes or failures in the cooperative as a whole. This factor of supplementary income became even more important with the decline in independent handicraft manufacture, discussed earlier in the chapter.

An additional dilemma faced by the state revolved around the question of agricultural productivity and its management by the state. The expectations inherent in the Plan for agricultural production were high; this sector was to serve the basic food

Table 21: Percentage of Total Income of Rural Households Derived from Private Sector, 1956 and 1957.¹

Area	1956	1957
Northwest China and Inner Mongolia	13.7	18.6
Northeast China	17.4	25.2
Central Plain	18.4	20.1
South China	27.1	33.6

SOURCE: Weinbaum, 1976:46; Table 4.

¹ Data are based on a survey of 4,231 households.

consumption requirements of rural and urban populations and at the same time allocate an increasing amount of produce for transfer to the state. This was to be accomplished, however, without significantly increasing capital or industrial inputs into the sector. The rising employment in nonagricultural labour, coupled with increased incomes, put even more pressure on peasants to produce the raw materials, which were the basis for food processing and a range of consumer goods. The manner in which the agricultural sector could be induced to meet these demands was a question of strategic choice. The state had several possible options (Eckstein, 1977:114-116). Pressure on agriculture could be eased through a slow-down in industrial investment and expansion; but this would violate the core objectives of the Plan. Inputs to agriculture could be increased, in the form of modern equipment and fertilizers which would increase output; but this would also mean diverting funds from targeted growth in industry. Finally, the state could have increased average incomes in agriculture, through raising prices on agricultural goods, and allowed agricultural producers to purchase the necessary modern inputs to increase production output. This, however, would have forced the state to invest more capital in those industries which engaged in agricultural producer goods production and less in industrial producer goods production.

In the final analysis the state adopted a position which combined organizational restructuring with the appeal of private supplementary income:

Under these circumstances the only path left open was increased mobilization of traditional inputs, resorting to a combination of political controls, ideological appeals, and material incentives to achieve this objective. The key instruments for the pursuit of this approach were gradual collectivization (in part to achieve this greater control), introduction of compulsory purchase quotas at fixed prices, guarantee of small private plots to peasant households, and continued access to free rural markets at which private-plot products could be sold. In effect, administrative devices for the allocation of agricultural products were being combined with price planning (Eckstein, 1977:115).

The extent to which these measures were successful in increasing agricultural output is addressed in Table 22. The comparatively higher rates of growth in 1955 and 1956 are related to the accelerated collectivization campaigns of that period (see Table 20). By 1954, grain output had increased only 0.9 percent over the previous year in spite of a projected 10 percent increase, and raw cotton, the foundation of the textile industry, decreased in output by almost 10 percent in both 1953 and 1954 (Walker, 1966:23). The cooperative movement of late 1955 and early 1956 was successful in increasing agricultural output through intensifying the use of traditional inputs. This included increasing the labour supply in agriculture, extending the area of double cropping, increasing the amount of irrigated land and reclaiming waste land (Schran, 1969:101-104 and Walker, 1968:418-34).

The impact of these policies on the structure of employment in rural areas is given in Tables 23 and 24. The mobilization of additional labour during the collectivist upsurge, resulted in an increase in the number of labour days on both a total and average annual basis. This had the effect of adding considerably more labour days to farm work plus increasing labour supply to subsidiary,

Table 22: Annual Growth Rate of Gross Agricultural Output (percent).

Year	Growth Rate
1953	3.1
1954	3.3
1955	7.7
1956	4.9
1957	3.5

SOURCE: State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:118 (Column 4)

Table 23: Rural Population, Employment and Labour Days: 1950, 1955 and 1957.

	Peasant Population (millions)	Total Peasants Employed (millions)	Average Annual Labour Days	Total Annual Labour Days (billions)
1950	479.7	222.6	119.0	26.5
1955	523.8	243.3	121.0	29.4
1957	541.3	260.3	159.5	41.5
Collectivization 1955 - 57	+17.5	+17.0	+38.5	+12.1

SOURCE: Gurley, 1976:244; Schran, 1969:47,75 and Selden, 1979:84.

Table 24: The Structure of Rural Employment by Labour Days: 1952-57 (Indices: Total Labour Days in 1952 = 100.0).

Year	Total Labour Days	Farm Work	Subsidiary Work	Corvee Basic Construction	Collective Affairs
1952	100.0	77.1	19.7	3.2	—
1953	101.4	78.1	20.0	3.2	—
1954	103.6	79.9	20.4	3.3	—
1955	108.4	83.0	21.0	3.9	0.4
1956	140.2	104.3	23.7	8.7	3.5
1957	152.8	113.4	25.8	9.7	3.8

SOURCE: Shran, 1969:75.

construction and collective affairs tasks (such as administration, education and cultural affairs).

Overall production output increased under the 'socialist upsurge'; peasant labour productivity, however, significantly decreased. The average net value of peasant production per 1952 man-years decreased throughout the latter Plan period from 175 to 136 yuan (Schran, 1969:121). Whether this was a consequence of moving too quickly in the collectivization of agriculture is a subject for debate elsewhere; the important point is the spread effect this had in other areas. For a short period in 1956, private agricultural production in the collective was severely restricted under the perceived threat it posed to collective accumulation. The resulting reductions in income and foodstuffs available to peasant households, and the increased flow of peasants to the more lucrative urban labour market led the state to reintroduce and expand the role of private agricultural production in 1957. The amount of land permitted for private plots was doubled to 10 percent of total arable land (Walker, 1968:437) and, as was shown in Table 21, the proportion of income derived from private production also increased. As a consequence the state was again confronted with the dilemma of competition between the private and collective sector. Moreover, the decline in labour productivity in 1956-57, was accompanied by lower consumption rates of agricultural and subsidiary products, and lower transfers of surplus to the state.

The overall performance of agriculture in the Plan period was one of unanticipated decline in the face of high expectations. The

conflict within state leadership circles over the role of agriculture and the pace of collectivization was reflected in fluctuating policies towards private production.¹⁶ The state was caught in the web of its overall objectives for industry, which set a course for agricultural transformation using traditional mechanisms. While more labour could be introduced, more land made arable and more crops planted, the ultimate limitations of these inputs, once implemented, were clear. In order to achieve the desired results from agriculture, a much more intensive expansion of inputs was required. To the extent that this undercut plans for industry, the state was unwilling to take this course of action. Rather, it chose to endorse a system whereby the peasant household could pool labour resources in collective production, and income from both the collective and private sphere, reducing the pressure on the state. In other words, the household was displaced as the unit of production under collectivized agriculture, but it remained in place as a unit of accumulation. This will become clearer in the following section; but the essential point is that while production was primarily removed to the collective sphere (in terms of management, control and allocation of resources), the maintenance of individuals and the distribution of income resources, took place through both collective and private spheres.

¹⁶ Obviously, these policies were not unrelated to larger political struggles in the CCP over the question of socialist transformation. Critical to this struggle was the Hundred Flowers Movement. Originally a campaign to encourage criticism, it subsequently turned into an 'anti-rightist' rectification movement setting the stage for the Great Leap.

C. Sex Subordination and the Five-Year Plan

The interaction of the state's approach to material production, discussed in the previous section, with the transformation in women's roles during the Plan period, illustrates the historical material conditions underlying the particularistic character of sex subordination between 1953 and 1957. Officially, the CCP never retreated from its 1948 position which established the interdependence of participation in production and female liberation.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the particular manner in which the former was organized, in relation to the overall economic objectives of the state, placed significant restrictions on the nature and extent of female liberation. In addition, the differing focus of strategies in rural and urban areas led in turn to different capacities to absorb female labour. In the following section I am interested in examining the sex division of labour in both the sphere of social production and that of domestic labour, and its relationship to the overall organization of production.

1. Women in Social Production

The integration of women into production during the Plan period varied between the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors of the economy, reflecting the variable contexts for organizing labour. In the agricultural sector, the introduction of producer cooperatives and the mobilization of traditional inputs for growth, as a

¹⁷ See earlier discussion of this policy in Chapter V, and its post-revolutionary endorsement in Chapter VI.

substitute for modern inputs, led to particular consequences for female agricultural labour. Most significantly, the proportion of women working in agriculture increased particularly during the collectivist upsurge of late 1955 and 1956. In Table 25, estimates of female agricultural participation are shown.¹⁸ Allowing for regional and seasonal differences, the apparent decline in proportion of women participating in 1957 coincides with the state's slow-down in collectivist policies, although their overall participation rate still exceeds the 1955 range.

As a proportion of the agricultural labour force as a whole, the role of women increased during the Plan period, particularly with the expansion of producer cooperatives. This did not mean overall employment in agricultural production expanded. As Schran has noted, the number of persons employed in producer cooperatives actually declined slightly, relative to independent peasant production, particularly for male workers (1969:56, 57). The increase in proportion of women is, in large measure, related to the decline of children involved in agricultural production. As shown in Table 26, the increases in female ratio more than compensated for the relative decrease of children. The slight decrease in males does not indicate relatively less men working; rather it most likely indicates, Schran argues, the allocation of more males to subsidiary and non-cooperative labour (1969-56).

¹⁸ Because Thorborg can only offer these data as broad estimates, based on a comparison and reconstruction of data from a variety of sources, it is best to see them as an indication of general patterns rather than precise reflections of participation figures.

Table 25: Estimated Number of Women Working in Agriculture as a Proportion of the Female Agricultural Population, 1955-57.

Year	Estimated Number Working (thousands)	Female Agricultural Population (thousands) ¹	Estimated Proportion Working of Total (percentage)	
			Low	High
1955	45,000 - 80,000	123,700	36.4	64.7
1956	85,000 - 115,000	125,200	67.9	91.9
1957	70,000 - 100,000	128,700	54.4	77.7

SOURCE: Column 1 - Thorborg, 1978:585; Table 6.

Column 2 - See Table 9.

¹ Based on women of working ages 15-59. Includes agricultural occupations only, both agricultural and subsidiary occupations, and subsidiary occupations only.

Table 26: Proportion of Men and Women in Agricultural Production, 1929-33, 1955 and 1957.

Year	Employment in Agriculture ¹		
	Men	Women	Children
1929 - 33	.60	24	16
1955	54.8	45.2	—
1957	56.7	43.3	—

SOURCE: Line 1; Buck, 1956:291.

Lines 2, 3; Schran, 1969:57.

¹ Excludes employment in subsidiary production only, and subsidiary and agricultural production together.

An examination of the relative permanence of integration of men and women in agricultural work is necessary before one can determine their relative share of labour. The question of how to organize the available labour resources in producer cooperatives was dealt with in a variety of ways but the consistent feature of labour absorption in cooperatives was the higher concentration of women in part-time participation. In a key document of 1957, released following the formulation of a second Five-Year Plan, the CCP addressed the question of labour absorption in collective agriculture.¹⁹ In calculating the labour resources of the cooperative, the age range for male labourers was established at 16 to 60 years, and for female labourers at 16 to 50 years. Furthermore, in calculating the use of labour resources, it was noted that "special care should be taken to set aside the time required for household labour" (translated in Chao, 1959:147). In Table 27, the relative share of men and women in the annual labour days of cooperative production is given. Almost one-third of women in cooperative production were concentrated in the more temporary and marginal category of less than 50 days, compared to 6.5 percent for males.

On the other hand, they represented only 8.2 percent of the most permanent and fully-integrated worker category, where men constituted almost 40 percent. The lower ratio of women involved in full-time production for the cooperative is not surprising, given the

¹⁹ See "How to organize agricultural labour power", translated in Chao, 1959:143-151.

Table 27: Relative Share of Annual Labour Days By Sex, 1957

Labour Days per annum	Relative Shares of:		
	Males	Females	Both
Less than 50	6.5	32.2	17.6
51 - 100	11.9	29.7	19.6
101 - 150	18.3	19.0	18.6
151 - 200	24.0	10.9	18.3
200 and above	39.3	8.2	25.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Schran, 1969:164; Table 6.6.

expectations of the state on women's participation in subsidiary production. In a 1954 People's Daily article, for example, a 'model' annual outline for women's work in rural areas was suggested as: 6 month of cooperative agriculture, 2 months of spinning, 2 months of mending and miscellaneous tasks, 2 weeks of shoe manufacture, and 2 weeks of weaving (quoted in Thorborg, 1978:588). Presumably the time not spent in agriculture or traditional handicrafts could be devoted to household labour and private agricultural production. How this was actually interpreted by the state in terms of working days differed. In the collectivist upsurge of 1956 the state encouraged a minimum of 120 working days for women and 250 for men. According to The Draft Program for Agricultural Development of 1956:

If agriculture, forestry, live-stock breeding, subsidiary rural production, and fisheries are to develop to the full, if the national wealth and the income of peasants are to grow, cooperatives must make fuller use of manpower and raise labour productivity. In the seven years beginning with 1956, every able-bodied man in the countryside ought to be able to put in at least 250 days a year. . . . Within seven years, every able-bodied women in the countryside should, besides the time she spends on household work, be able to give at least 120 working days a year to productive work (translated in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:124; emphasis added).

The slow-down in agricultural collectivization of 1957 and the relaxation of restrictions on private agricultural production was accompanied by a more flexible view on female working days. In the 1957 Revised Draft Program on Agricultural Development, a range between 80 and 180 days suggested, while male working days continued to be set at 250.²⁰

²⁰ See translated document in Chao, 1959:173-178.

The relative share of working days, while consistently less for females, varied in two senses. Regionally, one can demonstrate that areas with less labour demands in agriculture, such as the Northeast, reflected both a lower proportion of women in the agricultural labour force, and a lower number of working days (see Table 28). At the same time, there is evidence to suggest that female agricultural working days in rural areas close to urban centres were, on the average, higher due to the migration of males to industrial jobs in the cities. Thorborg, for example, cites a 1956 directive of the Municipal Women's Federation, where women in suburban areas were directed to take the major responsibility for cooperative production and ultimately constitute 90 percent of the cooperative's labour power (1978:589). The obvious implication of this objective was that women would substitute for male labour power, which could then be allocated to the expanding industrial sector.

One of the more significant consequences of the reduced degree of integration of women in agricultural production, was the effect it had on income potential. Given that remuneration from the cooperative was dependent upon labour contributed to cooperative production, the concentration of women in part-time production necessarily limited their access to income. Moreover, their labour was considered to be "worth" less than a male's even when they did participate. The unit of measurement used for determining remuneration was the labour day, with working days being evaluated as varying fractions of a labour day. One labour day was equivalent to 10 workpoints, and fractions of a labour day were reduced

Table 28: Agricultural Working Days, By Sex and Region, 1957

Region	Percent of total labour force		Average working days		Percent of total working days	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Northwest and Inner Mongolia	39.9	60.1	80	170	25.5	75.5
Northeast	34.7	65.3	60	185	14.5	85.5
Central	44.2	55.8	84	195	25.4	74.6
South	45.7	54.3	133	222	33.2	66.8

SOURCE: Thorborg, 1978:591; Table 10.

Table 29: Labour Day Equivalents of Peasant Workdays, Hsin Kuang San
(Xin Kuangsan) Agricultural Production Cooperative.

Category	Age Group	Equivalent of One Workday
Male, Full Labour Force Member	18-50	0.88 Labour Day
Male, Half Labour Force Member	16-17, 51-60	0.80 Labour Day
Female, Full Labour Force Member	18-45	0.77 Labour Day
Female, Half Labour Force Member	16-17, 46-55	0.48 Labour Day

SOURCE: Schran, 1969:31; Table 2.8

accordingly, in terms of workpoints awarded. In Table 29, the labour day equivalents of a representative production cooperative are given, demonstrating the structural subordination of female labour. A female who was able to contribute 'full' labour power to production, was still considered to be less productive, and hence less valuable, than a male who contributed only half the labour power (i.e., as determined by age and strength) of an average male member of the labour force.

The policy of equal pay for women in agricultural production, while endorsed by the state, was difficult to enforce given the decentralized control over wages in collective agriculture and the apparent contradiction in the state's approach to labour payments. On the one hand the state continued to espouse the principle of 'equal pay for equal work';²¹ however, the state also endorsed differential payment for different types to agricultural activity, and differential organization of labour power by traditional skills.

In the 'model' regulations for higher-stage APC's released by the state in June, 1956 the principle of equal pay for equal work was endorsed in Article 2 (Chao, 1959:29). Yet, later in Article 32, the basis for labour payment was defined in the following manner:

The payment standard for each type of work should be computed according to working days. The number of working days that accrues to a member from each type of work should be determined according to the technical standard required to each type, the degree of effort exerted in the process of labour, and the importance of this type of work to the entire production (translated in Chao, 1959:135).

²¹ See, for example, Article 26 of the Revised Draft Program of 1957 (translated in Chao, 1959:174).

The emphasis on the criteria of technical level of skill, physical effort and overall significance of the task were combined with an approach to labour organization that rested on traditional labour divisions. As long as the work women engaged in was sex-specific and evaluated as 'lower-grade' labour, the principle of equal pay for equal work was necessarily undermined.

At the same time, the co-existence of a collective sphere of income-producing labour and a private sphere of both production-for-use and production-for-exchange in the rural markets, provided a mechanism for labour absorption that lessened the pressure on the collective sphere. The latter was not the only arena of economic activity or the only source of household income. Both sexes in the household could generate income through production, although the evidence indicates that males were more fully attached to the collective sphere than females, with the possible exception of areas close to urban centres of nonagricultural employment. The maintenance of the household unit could thus be organized on a family basis, through drawing upon both spheres of income. The entrance of female labour into production, then, was useful, and even necessary, to the extent that a sex division of labour provided the mechanism for the allocation of such labour. The demand for female labour in cooperative production could fluctuate, as the sphere of private agricultural and subsidiary labour provided an additional sector of labour absorption.

The entrance of women into nonagricultural production during the Plan period, was set in the context of patterns described earlier

regarding nonagricultural investment and employment. The policies of the state concerning industrial expansion, wage reform and producer goods output created an attraction to the urban labour market which was not accompanied by parallel increases in the demand for labour. The unemployment crisis caused by this influx was only partially controlled through sporadic attempts to manipulate the supply of labour and restrict unnecessary hiring. The emphasis on heavy industry and producer goods led to a relative decline in light industrial production and the supply of consumer goods to an expanding urban market. The combination of these factors had particular consequences for the role of women in production. Two in particular proved to be significant: the oversupply of labour in urban centres, and the sectoral emphasis on modern industry.

The numbers of women found in nonagricultural occupations between 1953 and 1957 are demonstrated in Table 30. The total number of women increased from almost 7 million to just under 8 million during the Plan period. This represents an increase in proportion from about 18 percent to 20 percent of total nonagricultural employment (see Table 31). The majority of women were still found in the traditional branch of the economy, constituting almost 60 percent of total female nonagricultural participation in 1957 (based on calculations in Table 30). While this represents a decrease from their proportion in traditional occupations in 1952 (about 72 percent according to calculations in Table 10), it is significant to note that in the context of overall employment, traditional occupations had decreased significantly, and by 1957 represented less than 40

Table 30: Nonagricultural Employment: Female, 1953-57
(thousands)

	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957
Total ¹	6,954	7,482	7,197	7,723	7,924
Workers and Employees	2,132	2,435	2,473	3,266	3,286
State farms and forestry	—	—	74	87	99
Nonworkers and employees: ²	4,822	5,047	4,798	4,544	4,737
i) Handicrafts	2,134	2,441	2,247	2,000	2,192
ii) Salt Extraction	130	130	200	200	200
iii) Fishing	140	147	154	150	150
iv) Transportation: junks	91	91	91	86	86
v) Trade, food, drink	827	738	606	608	609
vi) Personal and professional service	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500

SOURCE: Hou, 1968:371; Table 18.

¹ Total represents Workers and Employees plus Nonworkers and Employees. State farm and forestry workers are subtracted from the category of Workers and Employees by Hou.

² Employment category used to distinguish those persons working in traditional sectors of nonagricultural economy, outside of state sector employment.

Table 31: Female Nonagricultural Employment as a Percentage of Total,
and of Workers and Employees, 1953-57

	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957
Total Nonagricultural Employment (thousands)	39,116	39,750	38,864	39,366	39,667
Female Nonagricultural Employment (thousands)	6,954	7,482	7,197	7,723	7,924
Female as % of Total	17.8	18.8	18.5	19.6	20.0
Total Workers and Employees (thousands)	18,069	18,588	18,861	23,939	23,921
Female Workers and Employees (thousands)	2,132	2,435	2,473	3,266	3,286
Female as % of Total	11.8	13.1	13.1	13.6	13.7

SOURCE: Line 1 and 4 derived from Table 8.

Line 2 and 5 derived from Table 30.

percent of nonagricultural occupations (based on calculations in Table 18). The implication of this for female participation was the fact that women were concentrated in what was essentially a declining sector of employment; a sector which was peripheral to the objectives voiced by the state in the First Five-Year Plan. Within the traditional branch, the highest concentration of women was found in handicrafts, representing about 46 percent of employment in traditional occupations, and almost 28 percent of total female nonagricultural occupations. As a proportion of the labour force in handicrafts, they represented 33 percent (based on calculations from Table 18 and Table 30). The other major sector of traditional employment continued to be service occupations, constituting almost 32 percent of traditional female employment.²²

Again, our earlier discussion of the reorganization of handicraft production, and the position of the state on the productivity of handicraft manufacture, should be considered here. The institutional re-structuring of handicraft production into cooperative arrangements did not lead to absorption of all persons previously engaged; as noted in Table 14, there was an overall decline in the number employed. Some of the surplus labour was re-allocated to the industrial sphere, as part of the state's attempt to introduce more mechanized production processes. The vulnerability of the handicraft sector was therefore partially compensated by

²² The reservations noted in Chapter VI regarding the data in the category must be considered. Hou's data must be weighed as rough estimates only.

expansion of the industrial sector. The question, however, is whether women were significantly integrated into industry in the light of decreasing opportunity in the traditional branch. The number of women engaged in labour in the modern branch of workers and employees increased from about 2 million in 1953 to over 3 million in 1957 (Table 30). This represents an increase from about 31 percent of all female nonagricultural employment to almost 42 percent. As a proportion of the labour force in the modern branch, female workers and employees increased slightly between 1953 and 54, but stabilized in the subsequent years to between 13.1 percent and 13.7 percent (Table 31). The role of women within industry did not expand during this period; in fact their proportion declined slightly. In Table 32, the distribution of men and women in nonagricultural material production in 1955 and 1957, indicates both the overall subordination of female employment in material production, and their relative decline in industry during this period. This decline occurred in the context of 29 percent increase in overall industrial employment between 1955 and 1957 (Emerson, 1965b:8). The trend toward increased entrance of males into industrial labour, begun during the period of rehabilitation, thus intensified throughout the Plan period to the point where women played only a slight role. The dominance of women in industry noted earlier for the pre-revolutionary period (ranging from 60 to 70 percent of total industrial labour) was completely eclipsed in this period. Furthermore, the concentration of women in light industry continued throughout this period; Emerson argues, with women constituting 60 percent of the textile labour force (1965b:8).

Table 32: Employment in Nonagricultural Material Production;
Percent Distribution by Sex and Branch, 1955 and 1957

Material Production Branches	1955		1957	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Handicraft and carrier service	70.0	30.0	70.0 ^a	30.0
Salt extraction	60.0	40.0	60.0	40.0
Fishing	90.0	10.0	90.0	10.0
Industry	81.6	18.4	82.7	17.3
Water conservancy ¹	96.9	3.1	—	—
Capital construction	96.7	3.3	—	—
Transport, posts and telecommunications	96.3	3.7	—	—
Trade, and the food and drink industry	93.5	6.5	87.9	12.1

SOURCE: Emerson, 1965b:26; Table 2.

¹ (—) indicates no data available.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, light industry emerged as a non-dominant industrial sector, reflected in lower capital allotments, lower growth rates in output and employment, and lower wages.

The wage reform policy of 1956, designed to draw labour to targeted areas, led to significant gaps between light industry, where women tended to enter, and heavy industry, where few women were located. Howe, for example, notes an annual average wage in 1956 of 868 yuan for electricity, 865 for coal, 797.8 for iron and steel, 654 for textiles and 638.4 for paper (1973:43). Even more significant, in light of the sectoral concentration of female nonagricultural labour discussed above, is the comparison of urban income by sector, given for Shanghai in Table 33. Those sectors where women were more likely to be found in nonagricultural labour, were also those with relatively lower incomes.

The subordination of women in modern nonagricultural employment can be related both to direct pressure from the state to freeze the employment of women at a manageable level in a context of labour surplus, and to the lack of women with scientific or technical training. The former, which will be addressed shortly, took the form of ideological pressure and institutional reorganization, which was directed at organizing women for non-renumerative labour. Regarding the latter, the dearth of such training was not alleviated during this period, by increasing the proportion of women in educational institutions. As shown in Table 34, the proportion of female students increased slightly for primary and secondary education

between 1952 and 1957, but remained stable for post-secondary institutions. The overall number of male and female graduates from post-secondary institutions, however, increased by 75 percent in these years (State Statistical Bureau, 1960:195).

The consequence of the dominance of males in technical and post-secondary educational facilities was reflected in the failure of women to achieve senior professional or administrative positions.

Using data on the proportion of women among cadres,²³ Emerson notes that in 1955 women constituted 15 percent of all cadres, 3 percent of senior administrators at county and provincial levels, 9 percent of engineering and technical positions, and 0.8 percent of strictly engineering positions (1965b:13). The majority of the female cadres; about 50 percent, were employed as nurses and teachers, but their overall numbers did not grow significantly in this period.

According to Emerson, the majority of these women were already in these occupations in 1949 (1965b:13).

The lack of training cannot, however, provide sufficient explanation for the subordinate role of women in the modern branches of the economy. Rather, it is necessary to examine the actions of the state in facilitating the use of the household unit as a sphere for absorbing surplus labour. For this reason, the question of female roles in social production must be related to the

²³ In Chinese employment surveys, this is used as a collective term referring to managerial, administrative and technical positions.

Table 33: The Urban Wage Structure in Shanghai, 1956
(average annual wages or income in yuan per annum).

Sector	Wage or Income
All workers and staff.	852
All employed persons	656
Workers and staff in industry	896
Handicrafts	655
Services	636

SOURCE: Howe, 1973:49; Table 33.

Table 34: Proportion of Female Students to Total Number of Students, 1952 and 1957
(percentage of total in each category)

	1952	1957
Primary Schools	32.9	34.5
Middle Schools	23.5	30.8
Technical Middle Schools	24.9	26.5
Institutes of Higher Learning	23.4	23.3

SOURCE: State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:201.

investigation of their relationship to domestic labour during this period.

2. The Domestic Sphere

The contradictions created by the state's strategy for economic growth have been outlined earlier in the discussion. The pressures on the urban labour market, the high migration of peasants to the cities, lagging consumer goods production and the failure of agriculture to achieve the anticipated increases in output, all combined to create a crisis situation for state planning. Attempts by the state to control the situation included mechanisms for controlling labour supply and incentives for increasing output.

The impact of this material context for the organization of the household and domestic labour was felt on several levels. This included re-emphasis on the housewife role, reinforcement of domestic production-for-use, tolerance of domestic production-for-exchange, initiation of birth control campaigns and the use of unpaid female labour for necessary tasks in the community.

The re-emergence of the 'cult of the housewife', beginning in 1955 and intensifying toward the end of the Plan period, represents a significant retreat from the position adopted during the rehabilitation years. At that time, both the media and women's organizations focused on the role women should play in social production, often with little attention given to management of the household.

During the latter years of the Five-Year Plan, however, the organizational and ideological focus gradually shifted to an

elevation of the housewife role.

In urban areas, where the oversupply of labour was most acute, this change was reflected in the role played by Dependants' organizations throughout this period. Originally organized in the early years of the recovery period, these associations were initially used to reach women in the home, who could not be reached through mass organizations based around production units. They played a decreasing role in organizing women, until 1955 when media attention was directed to the Dependants' Conferences being held throughout the country.²⁴ Membership in these organizations was determined by the husband's occupation and was based in the residence blocks housing factory and enterprise workers and employees. Working often in association with the Women's Federation, Dependant's organizations were reoriented to instruct women regarding their responsibilities in the home.

Their basic purpose was to help the dependants of workers to understand and assist their men folk and to provide a harmonious home atmosphere so that they might give their whole attention to their jobs. A whole genre of newspaper stories extolling women who protected their husbands from household or family worries so that their performance at work might not be adversely affected also boosted this image of the wife as a person who 'serviced' the worker (Davín, 1976:60).

The significance of these organizations lies in their redefinition in the Plan period, as groups mobilized fairly

²⁴ The most complete description of Dependants' organizations I have found in English, is available in Davín (1976:58-61; 154-160). Her discussion is based on the original documents of the national congress of dependents and a document entitled "Experience of work amongst the dependants of workers and employees." My discussion of these organizations is based on her description.

exclusively for household efficiency. Rather than using womens' roles as housewives as a point of contact for bringing them into production, Dependants' organizations shifted to a strategy which dealt only with the management of the household role.

The activities of Dependants' organizations during these years were directly related to the traditional images of women fostered by the 'Five Good Movement' launched in the mid-fifties. As an ideological campaign, the 'Five Good Movement' was designed to encourage efficiency in household duties, cleanliness in the home, assistance to husbands and children, and cooperative activities in the neighbourhood (Croll, 1978:257). . . Quoting a Women's Federation official, Croll notes:

. . . the Five Good Movement campaign was designed to enable each housewife to 'link up closely the household work with the work of constructing a socialist society' (1978:257).

The implications of this campaign in the overall economic context are noteworthy. While Croll endorses the official view of the time, that this was not part of an overall attempt to restrict women's entrance into production, the alternative analysis seems more plausible. The new emphasis given domestic labour was pervasive in this period, and new questions were raised regarding the participation of women in social production. In an article published in China Reconstructs on International Women's Day, 1956, issues previously taken for granted in the recovery period were re-opened for examination:

Should housewives go out to work? Should educated women stay at home and care for their children after they become mothers? . . . Should women try to do "men's" jobs? What

should be the grounds for seeking and granting a divorce?
(translated in Croll, 1973:2).

The fact that the participation of housewives in labour, the 'right' to work, or even the justification for divorce, was now open to question, was a serious retreat from the early views of the CCP. Moreover, the variable emphasis of this conservatism in rural and urban areas, indicates the variable capacity of each sphere to manage the labour supply.

In rural areas the 'Five Goods' campaign encouraged a responsibility for both social production and traditional sex-typed tasks. In a 1957 slogan from a provincial Women's Federation, for example, women were told to:

Be patriotic, love the co-operative, do productive labour. Run the home thriftily, and manage money and food. Unite your family and neighbours so they help each other. Lead the old, care for the young, teach the children. Study and help loved ones to work and study (translated in Davin, 1976:152).

It is clear from earlier evidence, regarding the integration of women into cooperative production, that the capacity to collectively absorb labour had its limits. In addition, it was noted that policy regarding the organization of agricultural labour directly encouraged allocation of time off from social production for completion of domestic tasks. As a consequence, the marginalization of women in terms of full-time cooperative production was evident, allowing supplementary labour time to be distributed between subsidiary production and domestic production-for-use. In urban areas, where the demand for labour lagged behind the supply, the crisis faced by the state in labour absorption created a more acute situation in restricting the demand for female labour. This was

reflected in the low rate of increase of female employment among workers and employees. Additional indications are found in the mounting ideological pressure of the time to consider household labour a possible alternative to the rewards gained from productive labour. In a long article in the women's magazine Women of China, for example, the director of the CCP's organization branch referred to the necessity to 'retire' women cadres, who were unable or unwilling to combine the responsibilities of work and family (Davin, 1976:170-71). Throughout China, a range of articles on topics such as fashion, thrifty techniques in household organization and good child rearing practices, conveyed a mood of traditionalism regarding women.

This is not to suggest that the unpaid labour of women was directed solely to the household sphere during this period. Rather, private production-for-exchange outside the state sphere, and unpaid labour services for the state both served as mechanisms for absorbing surplus female labour. Between 1956 and 1957, the more serious period of unemployment in urban areas, there emerged a series of small 'autonomous enterprises', unauthorized production units which generally engaged in consumer goods production (Howe, 1971:27-28). The labour power for this illegal sector was drawn from unemployed household members, with housewives playing a dominant role. Organized often around neighbourhood blocks, the resources for production were few, consisting usually of traditional implements, with output being exchanged on the black market.

These autonomous production units posed a dilemma for the state. On the one hand, there was a desire to eliminate these 'capitalistic' enterprises, and secure state-produced goods from competition with lower-priced black market goods. At the same time, there was a general recognition of the purpose served in providing employment for surplus labour, and offering supplementary consumer goods production to a growing urban population. In the final analysis, this sector was tolerated until the end of the Plan period for the same reasons private plots and rural free markets were allowed in agriculture. The provisions of an additional sector of employment and an additional source of income to the household, even if they were outside state control, had advantages which the state could not ignore. It is also significant to note that as these enterprises became more important in making profit, particularly with the freeze on state wage increases in 1957, the role of adult males became more dominant (Weinbaum, 1976:43). In other words, there is an indication that as long as this sector of production remained marginal (both in output and income) it remained staffed by females. When private income opportunities expanded in this sector, however, the entrance of male labour also expanded.

The surplus labour of housewives was also organized, during the employment squeeze, through urban residents committees.²⁵ These administrative units were first organized in the early 1950's in essentially residential areas, comprising anywhere from 100 to 600

²⁵ See Schurmann, 1968:374-80 for discussion of the origin and evolution of these committees.

households and subdivided into residents' units of 15 to 40 households (Schurmann, 1968:378). Housewives played the dominant role in these committees, which provided a range of services in the community. Their responsibilities were, as Schurmann notes, broadly defined:

The tasks of the urban residents committees were defined as: (1) making residents aware of government policies, (2) carrying out public security, fire prevention, culture and recreation, public sanitation, public works, relief, arbitration of disputes, and (3) collecting and reflecting the opinions and demands of the residents (1968:376).

The role of these committees in providing necessary labour in the community was significant. From caring for the elderly, to carrying out hygiene inspections of residents' homes, this pool of unpaid housewives provided crucial labour for the state.

The availability of support structures to relieve women from responsibility for domestic labour remained underdeveloped during the Plan period. In rural areas, there was some improvement in temporary facilities during the collectivist upsurge in 1956, when the provision of childcare was linked to the mobilization campaigns for cooperative labour. In Xinjiang, for example, the number of temporary child care stations during the busy season increased in 1956, from 222 to 916; permanent facilities, however, numbered only 60, for 204 agricultural cooperatives (Thorborg, 1978:598). The collectivization retrenchment of 1957 was paralleled by a decrease in child care support structures. In the province of Shandong, for example, facilities decreased between 1956 and 1957 from a total of 30,630 stations caring for 312,000 children, to 25,500 stations caring for 250,000 children (Thorborg, 1978:598). Based on estimates of agricultural population by age, and estimates of the proportion of

women working in agriculture. Thorborg argues that even at the peak availability of childcare stations in 1956, only 7 to 10 percent of the children of working mothers were cared for in this manner (1978:600). The remainder were looked after either by elderly relatives, or through mutual-aid groups organized by women. A report from one rural district in Anhui province in 1955 outlined the typical arrangements for child care in that area:

In this district (xiang) there are 24 co-operatives and 3 mutual-aid teams. In 581 households there are 455 children under six needing care. Some mothers get grandparents or elder children to care for them, and others make exchange agreements with neighbours. This has taken care of 332 of the children. Eight old ladies between them care for 28 more of the children. Thus, 216 mothers go to work with easy minds (quoted in Davin, 1976:126-27).

The report goes on to note that, for the remaining 95 children, a seasonal station was set up based on the labour of elderly women and children over 10, and a rotating contribution of labour by the mothers. The overriding implication of these arrangements, typical for rural districts, was the allocation of responsibility for child care to women. The state did not move to define this labour as part of the public sphere, nor did it take any significant role in providing the necessary inputs for its maintenance. The facilities which existed were most often arranged by women and staffed by women, usually on an ad hoc, temporary scale. The child care situation in urban areas was no better. While there was some expansion in kindergarten facilities,²⁶ there was no large-

²⁶ The figures released by the State Statistical Bureau suggest an increase between 1952 and 1957, from 6,500 to 16,400 kindergartens (1960:202).

scale attempt to provide permanent facilities external to the household (Davin, 1976:186).

Finally, the birth control debate gained momentum during this period, particularly following the release of census data for 1953-54. State planners began to express concern over the lack of attention to population planning, and by 1956 the Minister of Health had issued orders to all sectors of the health-care system, to intensify their efforts in contraceptive information and distribution (Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:295). In a speech by the Minister of Health in March, 1957, the link between socialist development and family planning was articulated:

If our population growth is not in accordance with planned childbirth, it will prevent our country from quickly ridding itself of poverty and becoming prosperous and powerful. For instance, taking the rate of our population growth as 2.5 percent, there will be an increase of 15 million people every year and our population will reach over 700 million in the period of the second five-year plan (1958-62). . . . With such a high population growth, the increase of our industrial and agricultural production, however, rapid, will certainly fail to satisfy adequately the requirements of the increased population (translated in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:297).

To what extent the birth control campaign was successful, is doubtful. Although there was an attempt to popularize contraceptive information through the media, the duration of the campaign was less than 12 months, before it was swept away in the tide of the Great Leap. During its peak period, the birth control movement led to the establishment of clinics for contraceptive distribution, public information meetings and instructional displays. In conjunction with these efforts, abortion was made more accessible, sterilization was permitted and later marriage was encouraged (Croll, 1978:246-47).

Although the momentum of the campaign was soon terminated, its emergence in the latter years of the Plan period did indicate a link between the state's labour absorption crises, and its desire to facilitate family planning. Once new mechanisms for labour absorption redefined the value of reproducing 'labourers', as happened in the Great Leap Forward, the structural reasons for facilitating birth control access were undermined.

C. Conclusion

The preceding examination of economic factors and their link to the role of women during the First Five-Year Plan, has suggested a range of apparent patterns and relationships. Again, these must be offered as suggested relationships, in view of the uneven and sometimes incomplete nature of the data.

The first pattern apparent in this period is the malleability of female labour. Depending on the particular demands for labour, the variable capacity to absorb labour and the relative emphasis of certain labour sectors over others, female labour participation was found to shift. Viewed in terms of the pending material crises faced by the state, the vulnerability of female roles in social production is instructive. Women were dominant in marginal sectors of employment and underrepresented in the core sectors. In addition their labour power was often re-allocated to sectors being vacated by males, as the latter shifted to more lucrative areas of employment.

Second, the available evidence indicates that the sex division of labour, reproduced during the period of rehabilitation,

was reinforced in hiring strategies during the Plan period. Women were more likely to be left in the declining traditional branch of the economy and concentrated in the traditional sectors of handicrafts and services. In the modern sector, while there were some absolute increases, their proportions in the dominant sector of industry declined. Their concentration in light industry was linked to the relative decline of that sector in relation to heavy industry. In agriculture the sex division of labour was apparent in the relative permanence of male vs. female labour in production, and the share of agricultural labour performed.

Third, the tolerance by the state of private production-for-exchange was crucial in creating two spheres of income-producing activity. The private sphere was important in both absorbing surplus female labour, and providing an independent means of supplementing income. The household, as the unit of accumulation, was thus not totally reliant on the collective sphere for its maintenance, and the goods which were produced served to alleviate some of the pressure on the state. At the same time, because this production took place outside the state sphere, responsibility for investment in resources and compensation for labour, did not accrue to the state.

Fourth, the shifting attention by the state to the question of domestic labour is significant in light of the problems faced in controlling labour supply in this period. While the housewife role was earlier denigrated as unproductive, it was now elevated for women as an alternative to social production. In other words, the family unit began to play an important role in its capacity to absorb

unwanted female labour. Women were encouraged to make their contribution to society from their location in the home, by being efficient in their necessary labour. Thus, not only did the state manage to place controls on female entrance, it also was able to organize domestic production-for-use, thereby reducing maintenance costs to the state. This was also apparent in the volunteer community services, performed without remuneration and usually by women. Where labour demands necessitated a reallocation of some domestic labour, such as in busy agricultural seasons, the state played a minor role in providing the required support structures. Generally it was assumed that the responsibility for such arrangements fell to women.

In summary, the collectivization policies and development strategies of the First Five-Year Plan created a material context in which the subordination of women continued, even though the particular appearance of certain factors in subordination may have shifted. The implication drawn from this analysis is that the strategic efficiency of the sex division of labour in domestic and social production can be related to the historically-defined needs in this period for particular forms of labour power and production relations. As an allocating mechanism, which both controlled labour supply and the organization of the household unit, the sex division of labour (and the economic subordination which stemmed from it) was reproduced by the state, both in its policies and actions.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD AND ITS AFTERMATH: 1958 - 1962

The Great Leap Forward of 1958-59 marked an important stage in the development of Chinese socialism for two crucial reasons. First, the policies and programs of this period reflect both a significant break from the Soviet-inspired model inherent in the Five-Year Plan, and a crystallization of Mao's vision of socialist development. Second, the debates and political struggles which marked the immediate post-Leap years of 1960-62 can be seen to reflect what is essentially a struggle between two competing 'lines' regarding socialist development. While there are some areas of overlap in the approaches, there nevertheless remain significant differences in policies concerning collectivization, industry, agriculture, mobilization of labour, incentive structures and the role of centralized administrative agencies. Moreover, the struggle between these approaches has remained an enduring feature of Chinese political-economic history since 1962. It is necessary, then, to examine the issue of sex subordination within the particular context created by this struggle.

A. The Great Leap Forward: Broad Principles

As the Plan Period was drawing to a close in 1957, and as

Party planners readied policies for the Second Five-Year Plan to be launched in 1958, growing concern was expressed over the apparent contradictions created by the First Five-Year Plan. I noted in the previous chapter that lagging growth rates in agricultural surplus, combined with the attraction of labour to the urban market as a result of rapid industrialization, resulted in an increasing strain on both the agricultural and nonagricultural spheres of production. In addition, the persistence of a private production sector in both rural and urban areas, while valuable in providing supplementary income to the household, undercut the Party's stated ideals regarding socialist transformation. This contradiction was complicated further by factors such as the differential material incentives favouring technical and managerial skills, the concentration of capital inputs in urban areas to the detriment of rural areas, and the lag between heavy and light industry.

An early and important formulation of these concerns was made by Mao in April, 1956 following the 'socialist upsurge' in collectivization. In a speech to the Politbureau of the Central Committee, he outlined the 'ten great relationships' which he saw as the major contradictions faced by the Party.¹ Containing both a

¹ The text of this speech was not officially released until after Mao's death. Two versions are available; the official translation appears in Peking Review (January 1, 1977), while an earlier, unofficial version, which circulated in China in 1967, is available in Schram's edited collection of Mao's speeches between 1956-71 (See Mao, 1974:61-83). I have compared the two versions and rely here on the earlier version.

direct criticism of the Soviet model of development and a reformulated vision of socialist development, Mao's speech touched on issues ranging from foreign policy to the treatment of minorities. Particularly significant to the discussion at hand is his treatment of the relationship between industry and agriculture, and between heavy and light industry. While reaffirming the priority of heavy industry to overall growth, Mao stressed the need to redress the relative lag in agriculture and light industry.

In future we must put more investment into light industry and agriculture so that the proportion of investment they receive is increased. When we increase this proportion, does it mean we have changed the key sector? No, the key sector has not been changed. It is still heavy industry, but more emphasis will now be put on light industry and agriculture. (Mao, 1974:63)

Tied to other concerns regarding regional imbalances and over-centralizing tendencies in administrative structures, Mao's speech was a call for mobilization of all significant factors in production--traditional and modern. It was, for Mao, a reiteration of themes introduced months earlier in his 'Draft Program for Agriculture Development',² a program which had been introduced during the acceleration of collectivization.

The political power struggles of late 1956 and early 1957 are marked by confusion and ambiguity. At the Eighth Congress of the CCP in September 1956, a second Five-Year Plan was adopted, reaffirming

² See discussion in Chapter VII.

the basic principles of development underlying the original plan.³ Mao's draft program for agricultural development was put aside, and 'Mao Zedong thought' was removed as the guiding philosophy behind Party policy (see Schram, 1969:83; Schurmann, 1968:143 and Chesneaux, 1979:74-75). However, the following months were marked by dramatic shifts in the balance of power in leadership circles and increasing criticism of the Soviet model. Partially, this was due to the turbulence of the Hundred Flowers movement which began in the spring of 1956. What had originated as a campaign to encourage the participation and criticism of intellectuals emerged as a 'rectification' campaign similar to the 1942 version in Yanan. The suppression of the movement in the spring and summer of 1957 was specifically directed against targeted 'rightist' factions both within and outside Party circles, and culminated in a wide-spread transfer of intellectuals and Party members to work in rural areas.

It was against this tumultuous backdrop that the Great Leap Forward was forged. While its principles were established by the Central Committee in the fall of 1957, and echoed themes and policies present in the socialist upswing of early 1956, it was not officially launched as a new policy program until the spring of 1958.

In a speech to a mass rally in Beijing in November of 1957, Liu Shaoqi introduced one of the first public indications of a new

³ For outline of the proposals of the Second Five-Year Plan, see documents contained in the proceedings of the Congress; 'Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China' (Chinese Communist Party: 1956, volume 1).

direction.⁴ In his speech, Liu referred to the need to develop industry and agriculture simultaneously, and suggested that this would be accomplished either very quickly or very slowly.

There are two ways to accomplish this task: one way is to do things quicker and better, and the other to do things slower and aim at lower standards. Which way should we adopt? The Central Committee of the Party considers that the former way should be adopted and the latter rejected We should strive to achieve quantity and speed in various fields under the conditions of ensuring quality and economy (Liu in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:399).

In order to achieve these goals, Liu went on to stress the need for a 'mass initiative' combined with politically-based labour management. As a consequence of the latter, the terms 'red' and 'expert' took on a renewed importance.

All those who are in a position to do so should work hard to turn themselves into experts who are both "red" and expert. . . . Our intellectuals must understand that it is impossible to keep away from politics. Alienation from revolutionary politics might lead to reactionary politics. Lack of a correct political stand might lead to a reactionary one. Such people can never work for our socialist cause sincerely and reliably. . . (Liu in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:400).

This emphasis on political consciousness and technical skill was a significant turn away from the conception of skilled labour inherent in the Plan period; for now it was a situation of 'Politics in command'.

⁴ See 'The Significance of the October Revolution', a speech delivered on November 6, 1957. The English text is available in Bowie and Fairbank (1962:393-400). Their version is taken from the New China New Agency's translation which appeared in Current Background (#480).

The stress on speed and quantity was echoed by Mao in a speech to the Supreme State Conference on January 28, 1958:

Now our enthusiasm has been aroused. Ours is an ardent nation, now swept by a burning tide. . . . We shall be able to do things which we could not do before. When our nation has this great energy we shall catch up with Britain in fifteen years. . . (Mao, 1974:92-93).

The notion of 'catching up' with Britain in industrial output became one of many slogans during the Leap period which predicted massive boosts in productivity and growth. This was predicated upon an overall approach encompassing two significant criteria: increasingly radical institutional changes (which in turn depended on a politically-conscious and motivated population), and massive reserves of under-utilized labour power. Before turning to a discussion of specific policies and their consequences, it is useful to consider the main feature of the Great Leap Forward program for growth.⁵

First, the overriding goal of the Leap was, as noted earlier, the simultaneous development of industry and agriculture. Faced with an increased burden on the agricultural sector to supply the raw materials for an ever-increasing nonagricultural sector, the CCP chose a dual strategy to achieve this goal. In the place of

⁵ Among the more important general policy statements is Liu's speech to Second Session of the CCP Eighth National Congress on May 5th, 1958. See 'The Present Situation, The Party's General Line For Socialist Construction And Its Future Tasks' in Current Background (No. 507, June 2:1958). Also significant is the 'Revised Program for Agricultural Development', accepted by the CC in October, 1957. The English text is available in Chao, 1959.

increased capital inputs to agriculture, it chose to mobilize on a mass basis all underutilized labour in rural areas. The mobilization of this labour for labour-intensive projects such as land reclamation and irrigation drives, or flood control projects could then free other agricultural labour power for productive work elsewhere. At the same time the CCP sought to increase rural development through a policy of industrial diversification. In other words, there was an attempt to encourage the growth of small-scale industrial enterprises in rural areas, particularly in industrial sectors where labour could be substituted for capital resources. Two advantages were seen to follow from such a policy. On the one hand, regional dispersion of industry would help develop previously-backward areas. On the other hand, it was hoped that this approach would lead to rural self-sufficiency. The assumption underlying the latter advantage was that local industry would provide the technical and capital resources necessary for modernizing agriculture. In other words, agriculture productivity could be enhanced from within the rural sector, and the capital accumulation derived from large-scale, modern industry could be re-invested in heavy industry. Nevertheless, the rural sector would continue to supply the industrial, urban sector with the necessary foodstuffs and raw materials to sustain its productivity.

The preceding approach encapsulates what came to be known as a policy of 'walking on two legs'. Beyond the more general line of simultaneous development in industry and agriculture, it implied the simultaneous reliance on large and small-scale industry, and on modern and traditional means of production. It is a policy which

above all else is a benchmark for the shift away from the economic priorities of the First Five-Year Plan. The latter's emphasis on urban-centred industry generating a 'spread effect' to agriculture was replaced with a model of industrial decentralization accompanied by massive inputs of surplus labour.

A second defining factor of the Leap Period was its call for decentralization in administration and economic management. Linked with Mao's general criticisms of Party bureaucratization and excessive administrative centralization,⁶ it took specific shape in the evolution of regional and locally-based administrative units which exercised more independence in setting quotas, allocating labour and rewarding initiative. Factories and various industrial enterprises were increasingly transferred from state ministerial control to provincial and municipal control. In rural areas, decentralization took the form of commune organization and management--a particular form of administration which allowed both Party control of economic matters, through local CCP organs, and local management and decision-making on day-to-day matters. Underlying the demand for decentralization was Mao's conviction that it was an important step toward fostering worker and peasant initiative in production. In reference to factory production,

⁶ See, for example, his important speech 'On the correct handling of contradictions among the people' delivered in February, 1957. Two available English translations are the officially-released translation through Foreign Languages Press, and S. Schram's translation based on original sources (see Schram, 1969:304-312). Also pertinent is Mao's section on 'the relationship between the state, the units of production and the individual producers' in his 'Ten Great Relationships' speech see Mao, 1974:68-71).

for example, Mao noted:

I mean we should pay attention to arousing the initiative and enthusiasm of the workers. The factory as a complete unit of production also has a problem of initiative and enthusiasm.

Everything has both unity with other things and its own independence. Everything also has features in common with other things as well as its own distinctive features. Things cannot only possess unity and common features, without also having independence and distinctive features. . . . So each unit of production, each individual has to have initiative and a certain degree of independence. All must have an independence which is linked with unity (Mao, 1974:9).

Thus, while 'unity' with overall goals defined by the CCP was important, the relative independence of the productive unit was seen to be significant in the fulfillment of those goals.

A third key element of the Great Leap Forward was the rapid acceleration of the collectivization movement with the introduction and spread of the commune system. Communes were not simply new management units designed to decentralize industry; they were a fundamental step in the institutional transformation of the agricultural sector. Building upon the foundation established by the Advanced Producer Cooperatives (APCs), the communes encompassed much larger production units than previously attempted. Initially formed through the unification of between twenty and thirty APC's, communes were designed to coordinate all administrative functions from the allocation of labour reserves for labour-intensive projects to land-use patterns and income allocation.⁷ Roughly coinciding with the

⁷ Useful secondary analyses of commune organization can be found in Larsen, 1967:217-219; Eckstein, 1977:72-84; Schram, 1969:35-43; and Schurmann, 1968:380-98, 474-86.

boundaries of established townships, the commune signalled an integrated, administrative unit which combined industrial, agricultural, social-cultural and policing functions. The gradual spread of communes in rural districts was soon accompanied by the emergence of urban communes, which reflected residential, production and administrative units brought together under centralized management.

Several features of the commune system are noteworthy. One is the transfer of property rights from collective ownership to communal ownership. Land, tools and labour were collectively pooled in the APCs and subsequently individual households were reimbursed according to relative contribution of each resource factor. With communal ownership, all productive assets were taken over by the commune and any decisions concerning their use and allocation were made by the commune's administrative council. This appropriation had obvious implications for the existence of the private plots and rural free markets which had flourished at the end of the Plan period. The result was the virtual disappearance of private agricultural production in 1958-59 and, as Eckstein notes, a serious decline in pig, poultry and vegetable production (1977:72). Another related feature of this system was the transformation in the system of wage distribution. In the early stages of the commune movement, payment according to labour was abandoned and replaced by a distribution system based partially on needs and partially on labour. The result was a combination of payment in kind with various supplies, and monetary payments. As will be discussed later, the consequences of

this transformation led to the re-introduction of the old wage system at the end of the Leap period. Finally, a significant feature of the commune system was its increasing move toward decentralized administration. When introduced, the communes were characterized by a highly-centralized administrative structure; but this gradually gave way to more localized management, particularly at the production brigade and team levels, as the Leap period entered its crisis years. This shift between increasing centralization and decentralization of management in the commune has been attributed to the competition between the requisites of political control and the requisites of production efficiency. As Eckstein has argued:

Concentrating resource-allocative decisions in the commune centre was designed to assure maximum control, innovation and work effort in the countryside. However it became quickly apparent that this control brought with it such marked reduction in efficiency that it contributed to a decline in farm production. Once this was clearly understood, allocative and distributive functions were moved down to the team level (Eckstein, 1977:81).

What is noteworthy about the role of communes in the overall Leap strategy, was the attempt to use radical institutional restructuring to bring about an accelerated rate of economic growth. This goal is clearly stated, for example, in a 1958 provincial directive on the formation of communes:⁸

The goal of the merger of small cooperatives into large ones for the building of people's communes is to make production relations suited to the productive forces which are being developed by leaps and bounds, to promote the development of production at a high speed, and to rapidly change the look of the countryside (Chinese Communist Party, 1958:18).

⁸ This is an extract from the 'Directive of the Hopei Provincial Committee on the Building of People's Communes'; August 29, 1958.

In summary, the thrust of the party/state in launching the Great Leap Forward was that high industrial performance alone could not build socialism. Rather, the simultaneous development of industry and agriculture, through a dual strategy of traditional and modern inputs, and large and small-scale industrial expansion, was encouraged. The key to this approach was the recognition that China's vast labour pools could be tapped in such a manner as to substitute for capital inputs in particular sectors of production. The mobilization of that labour and the reorganization of production relations became the focus of Leap planners.

B. The Great Crisis: Retrenchment and Reorganization

The opposition to, and retrenchment from the policies of the Great Leap Forward emerged slowly and sporadically. The gains in agricultural productivity experienced in 1958, based partially on favourable weather conditions and particularly successful harvest seasons, seemed to confirm the Leap's strategic plans. In addition, the increases of capital to heavy industry, and of labour to small-scale industry were reflected in significant growth rates. The result was the formulation of exaggerated productivity expectations for 1959, a year which entailed extremely poor weather conditions. The situation deteriorated even further throughout 1960-61 as successive poor agricultural harvests, brought on partially by drought in the North and floods in the South, created an acute food crisis, with spill-over effects in other production sectors. Industrial production began to decline in 1961 and China was caught in the midst of a severe economic crisis.

4

The factors which led to the retrenchment in Leap policies (although the G.L.F. was never officially 'abandoned' as a program for economic growth) were varied. First, as indicated above, were the natural calamities that struck China between 1959 and 1961. More than 60 percent of the cultivated land suffered from either drought or flooding (Selden, 1979:97). The severe agricultural shortages which resulted reached famine proportions in some regions, and were only partially relieved by the importation of foreign grain, beginning in 1961.

A second factor in the increasing disillusionment with Leap policies centred around the commune system. The appropriation of private plots, household implements of production and pigs and poultry, led to a decline in the household's ability to supplement income from commune work. When this was combined with the abolition of a wage system based directly on labour contributed, the Party began to encounter serious difficulties in mobilizing peasant initiative. Moreover, the centralization of administration within the commune centre was increasingly met with resistance by peasants accustomed to organizing production relations at lower levels of the collective's hierarchy. As other contradictions in commune organization began to surface, the Party was faced with serious criticisms of the pace under which institutional reorganization had occurred. Overall they were faced with the task of maintaining incentives in agricultural production while fostering accelerated growth rates for state accumulation.

In summary, by 1960 China was facing a serious economic crisis characterized by food shortages, a downturn in consumer goods production, declining capital goods output, severe reductions in foreign exports and, finally, high urban unemployment (see Eckstein, 1977:202-3; Chesneaux, 1979:98-103 and Gray, 1973:134-36). This crisis was accompanied by political and ideological struggles within the CCP as the crisis deepened and opposition to the Leap policies became more open.

The political struggles which came to accompany the economic crisis emerged gradually and gained momentum as the economic situation deteriorated. As early as the summer of 1959 the Party was forced to acknowledge failure on several fronts, while nevertheless maintaining adherence to the general line of the G.L.F. At the Lushan Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee, a compromise between Mao and his critics was managed, therefore preventing the emergence of an open split in the CCP. The most severe critic of the Leap policies, Minister of Defence P'eng Te-huai, was formally denounced for his views, and Mao gave a lengthy self-criticism for certain 'errors' he saw as occurring.⁹

I have committed two crimes, one of which is calling for 10,700,000 tons of steel and the mass smelting of steel. If you agreed with this, you should share some of the blame. But since I was the inventor of burial puppets, I cannot pass on the blame: the main responsibility is mine. As for the people's communes, the whole world opposed them; the Soviet Union opposed them. . . . Have we failed this time? All the comrades present say there have been gains; it is not a complete failure. Is it mainly a failure? No,

⁹ Useful background information on the Lushan Conference can be found in Schram (1973). Also useful are Documents 39-42 in Bowie and Fairbank (1962).

it's only a partial failure. We have paid a high price. A lot of 'communist wind' has blown past, but the people of the whole country have learned a lesson (Mao, 1974:145-46).¹⁰

Mao's main point in his self-criticism speech was not that the general approach he had advocated was wrong. Rather, he admitted only to over-optimistic expectations and perhaps too zealous an attempt to bring about communism. In this he still had the support of the Party. The official communique¹¹ issued at the end of the Lushan Conference reaffirmed the commitment to the Leap policies but attempted to revise the production targets to more realistic levels than those outlined in Liu's May, 1958 speech to the Party's National Congress (see footnote 5). Blaming the previous "overassessments" on a lack of statistical experience combined with an unprecedented bumper harvest, the Central Committee refrained from any criticism of the "general line" and reaffirmed their commitment to Mao.

Nevertheless, the political isolation of Mao and his supporters had already begun. His departure from the position of President of the People's Republic of China, and his replacement by Liu, was accompanied throughout 1960 by a general retreat from Party matters. Moreover, references to Mao rarely appeared in Party-

¹⁰ The reference to "inventor of burial puppets" is a Chinese expression which designates the bearer of misfortune (see Schram's fn. 22 in Mao, 1974:318-19).

¹¹ See 'Communique of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party' reprinted in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962:533-36.

controlled publications and periodicals during this period (Schram, 1973:68).¹²

Demands for readjustment of economic policies increased throughout late 1959 and 1960, and they were met by the progressive abandonment of the more extreme Leap measures. Commune administration, for example, was readjusted to allow for more lower-level input and management, and the payment-in-kind wage system began to disappear. Communes were reduced in size, work norms and production quotas were left to team and brigade-level determination, and private plots were reintroduced.

The Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee held in Beijing in January, 1961 marked a formalization of the Party retreat from Leap policies. Various decisions regarding the reduction of investment in heavy industry, support for agricultural production as the basis of economic growth and the reintroduction of private plots signalled the changing priorities.¹³ The Central Work Conference which followed in the spring and the Second Lushan Conference in the summer of 1961 further consolidated the attack against "leftist excesses" committed under the banner of the Leap Program. Liu's pointed criticisms of the Great Leap Forward at the Enlarged Work Conference of the Central

¹² As Schram (1973:64) notes, this withdrawal should not be taken as necessary indication that the Party leadership had completely 'ousted' Mao. Rather, he turned his attention to building a strong base of support in the People's Liberation Army during this period, and commenting on foreign policy matters.

¹³ A list of communiques and documents released following the Plenum are summarized in Lieberthal, 1976:166-67. Also see Documents of the Central Committee of the CCP 1959-69, edited by the Union Research Institute (Hong Kong:1971).

Committee in January, 1962 and in February to the Standing Committee of the Politbureau, were accompanied by a call for a retrenchment of investment in industry, the establishment of production quotas using the household unit and the allowance of individual farming.¹⁴

Finally, Zhou En-lai's speech to the National People's Congress on April 16, 1962 marked a full-scale outline for readjustment and retrenchment. The '10 Point Program' he announced specifically redefined the priorities in planning as first agriculture, second light industry and finally heavy industry.¹⁵ This 'Agriculture First' approach was composed of three essential factors (Eckstein, 1977:60-61). First the emphasis on agriculture, was accompanied by a call for the 'technical' transformation of that sector, creating an expansion in industrial sectors which manufactured agricultural inputs. Second the overall retrenchment from high growth expectations was reflected in a decrease in capital investment by the state, particularly in heavy industry. Finally, the new approach placed greater emphasis on material incentives to stimulate production in both agricultural and nonagricultural spheres. The results of these new priorities were reflected in several areas. Investment allocated to agriculture rose, urban immigrants were encouraged to return to rural areas, income distribution was increasingly decentralized, private agricultural

¹⁴ Summaries of these meetings can be found in Lieberthal, 1976:179, 182-83.

¹⁵ A concise summary of the Ten-Point Program is available in Wheelwright and McFarlane, 1970:59.

production reappeared on a large scale and unprofitable small-scale industries were left to their own defences.

The political realignment of the Party leadership that occurred throughout late 1960 and 1961 entailed a shift to the more conservative and pragmatic measures that were to prevail in policy-making throughout 1962. Under Liu's guidance, with the support of Deng Xiao-Ping, a new economic policy for China took shape emphasizing moderation, balanced growth and a strong centralized control over policy-making. The dominance of this approach was to prove short-lived in the shifting political climate that followed the Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee in the fall of 1962, eventually erupting in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This is not to say that more moderate economic policies were abandoned after 1962; the Tenth CC Plenum reaffirmed the Agriculture First strategy and continued to support private production as an important supplement to the collective economy. What did take place, beginning with the Tenth Plenum, was a continuing struggle between the 'two lines' of economic development. The points of difference between these lines, which had emerged throughout the Leap years and its aftermath, can now be summarized before moving to a discussion of their impact on industrial and agricultural performance. The debate between the right and left-wing factions of the CCP essentially revolved around the question of collectivization policies, the role of private production, the role of centralized bureaucratic structures, the nature of incentive mechanisms, the political education of workers and the mechanisms for agricultural and

industrial growth.

The pragmatists in the Party, dismissed as 'capitalist-roaders' by the left, favoured moderation on all fronts. Thus, for example, their stance toward commune organization was one of caution, emphasizing the need to curb the size of communes, the range of communal services and the power exercised by the commune centre.

They openly advocated private agricultural and sideline production in order to boost household income and reduce the pressure on the state for provision of necessities. In conjunction with this, they encouraged the use of material incentive mechanisms, including such strategies as piece-rate wages, in order to increase worker and peasant productivity. Planning and resource allocation was defined as the responsibility of centralized state structures, with local decision-making taking place largely in the realm of policy administration. The rightist view of political education and mobilization was to minimize the role of cadre influence in the labour process and reduce the significance of 'red and expert' labour policies. Finally, their approach to agricultural and industrial growth was most definitely to favour agricultural growth, largely through the modernization and technical transformation of that sector.

The Maoist model of development, which took shape as the Great Leap evolved, was comprised of very different factors. First, the approach to collectivization was one of the defining features of Leap strategy. The rural communes were advocated as the key institutional change for altering the relations of production in the

countryside. The collective services advocated as essential for releasing surplus labour included communal dining facilities, nurseries and health services. Communal ownership of all property and production resources was seen as a necessary factor in preventing 'capitalist tendencies' among the peasants. This was reflected as well in the Maoist denunciation of private, sideline production which was defined as harmful to collective accumulation.

Incentive structures, according to the left faction of the CCP, were integrally linked with political education and mobilization. Basing their campaigns for increased productivity on a series of normative appeals rather than monetary rewards, Leap advocates stressed the fostering of worker and peasant initiative largely through raising the political consciousness of the people. This was closely tied to the anti-bureaucratic and decentralizing themes introduced by Mao. As noted earlier, the link between relative independence from the centre and increased initiative was established by Mao as the key in achieving the overall goals set by the state.

Finally, the economic policies of the left concerning agricultural and industrial development combined an emphasis on heavy industry as the key sector with a recognition of the simultaneous need to boost agricultural and light industry growth rates. The mechanisms suggested for carrying this out are what distinguishes the Maoist and pragmatic approaches. The solution for Mao was found in the intensive mobilization of traditional inputs (including labour power) in sectors such as agriculture and small-scale industry,

increased capital inputs to modern industry and the diversification of rural labour power into local, small-scale industry which would support the technical needs of agriculture.

The shifting dominance of these two approaches after 1962, in the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution era, is not part of my examination in this thesis. For the various reasons noted in the beginning of my discussion of China, I end my historical examination with the immediate post-Leap years of crisis and reorganization. What interests me in the following analysis is the consequences of these various policies, first for the performance of industrial and agricultural sectors, and secondly for the alleviation or intensification of sex subordination. Again, as in the previous chapters, I will attempt to investigate whether there exists any particular pattern in the appearance of significant economic factors and the socioeconomic role of women.

C. Policies and Performance

1. The Industrial Sector

The accelerated collectivization drive of private industry in 1956 had effectively eliminated the role of private industry and individual handicrafts in China's economy.¹⁶ The central goal of state industrial policy during the Leap period was therefore directed at growth rates rather than ownership patterns. The key means chosen to accelerate industrial expansion included increased state

¹⁶ See Chapter VII, Tables 13 and 14.

investment, decentralization of small-scale industry, and expanded use of labour power.

The fixed investment of the state during this period reflected several patterns. In Table 35, the main trends in sector allocations of gross fixed investment are given, using the final year of the Five-Year Plan Period as a basis of comparison. These figures indicate a relative continuity in the proportion allocated to agriculture and an increase in the proportion allocated to industry. Within industry, it demonstrates a sharp increase in the share given to heavy or producer-goods industry, with either a stabilization of investment or decrease in all other sectors. These patterns are consistent with the stated Leap period policy of using capital inputs in heavy, modern industry while substituting traditional inputs in other sectors. The figures in Table 35 represent, it should be noted, all forms of investment (state, cooperative and commune). Nevertheless, data released by the State Statistical Bureau for 1958 regarding state fixed investment clearly indicate a significant rise in state investment in industry, with particular emphasis on heavy industry. Industry received 64.8 percent of total state investment and agriculture received 9.9 percent, compared to a 1957 distribution of 52.3 percent and 8.6 percent respectively. Within industry allocations, 87.4 percent went to heavy industry and 12.6 percent to light industry; a shift from the 1957 distribution of 84.8 percent to heavy industry and 15.2 percent to light industry (State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:59-61).

Unfortunately, there are no aggregate figures available on

Table 35: Sector Shares of Gross Fixed Investment (in percent), 1957-59.

Sector	1957	1958	1959
Agriculture	23.0	24.0	23.2
Industry, construction and public utilities	41.3	50.9	49.8
Heavy industry	29.2	41.1	40.6
Light industry	5.7	5.9	5.9
Transportation and communications	12.6	10.0	12.2
Residential construction	9.7	6.6	6.6
Service and trade	<u>13.4</u>	<u>8.4</u>	<u>8.3</u>
Total Fixed Investment ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Hollister, 1967:128, Table 4.

¹ Subtotals do not always equal 100.0 because of rounding.

fixed investment for the period between 1960 and 1962, partially due to the collapse of the statistical system upon Soviet withdrawal of technical assistance. While firm data are lacking, it is nevertheless reasonable to suggest that, on the basis of revised economic policies, several investment factors changed.¹⁷ There was, initially, a retrenchment in state investment on most fronts in absolute terms, as the state attempted to pull itself out of the peak period of economic crisis. As the economy began to stabilize in 1962, it appears that investment priorities shifted, reflected in a larger share in both absolute and relative terms to agriculture. Finally, priorities attached to particular industries also shifted, with the steel and coal sectors declining relative to the chemical industry, which gained increasing importance as a stimulus to modernizing agriculture (Eckstein, 1977:189).

The pattern of industrial growth during the Great Leap Forward and the crisis years reflects several factors. The channelling of increased investment into industry led to an annual growth rate of 32 percent for 1958-59, compared to 16 percent for the entire Five-Year Plan Period (Field, 1967:273, Table 2).¹⁸ The

¹⁷ Similar conclusions, based on policy analysis rather than aggregate data, are offered by sinologists such as Eckstein (1977), Hollister (1967) and Riskin (1971).

¹⁸ Field's estimates for the Leap and post-Leap years are not, he acknowledges, as reliable as those for the years 1949-57. His reconstructed estimates, which show a lower growth rate than those officially released by the State Statistical Bureau, are based on data contained in various physical output series. Because the number of these series decreased after 1960, he indicates that his estimates on industrial growth for those years should be taken as only general trends.

growth rate in handicraft production, on the other hand, was 10 percent, a slight increase from the Plan Period rate of 7 percent. Within industry, variable growth rates ranged from a low of 15 percent in food industries and 26 percent in textiles to a high of 59 percent in petroleum and 46 percent in electric power. This surge in industrial production was felt most strongly in heavy, producer-goods industries; particularly the fuels industries (Field, 1967:275-76). The decline in industrial production began in the aftermath of the agricultural failures of 1960 and 1961 and the withdrawal of Soviet aid in 1960. The index of industrial production used by Field suggests a drop from a high of 188.5 in 1960, to 124.5 in 1961 and 109.6 in 1962 (1967:273).¹⁹ Furthermore, it indicates that industrial production did not attain its pre-Leap peak level until 1965, after several years of slow but steady recovery. It is significant to note that light industries, such as food and textiles, were much slower to recover, whereas heavy industry was rehabilitated more quickly (Field, 1967:277). His explanation for the lag lies with the dependence of light industry on raw materials from agriculture, the sphere most crippled by the crisis years.

The decentralization and dispersal of industry to rural areas was one of the defining features of economic policy during the Leap Period. This is not to say that Leap policy on rural industry marked a complete turn-around from the Plan Period. As Riskin (1971) argues, the common theme in both periods was to define the role of

¹⁹ This index is based on the year 1956 as the base point of 100.0.

rural industry (also referred to as 'local' or 'small' industry) as one of serving agriculture through the production of agricultural producer goods and a range of consumer goods, and by using surplus and waste materials. However, rural industry policy during the Leap stipulated in addition that these locally-controlled industrial units should also assist the state-operated, heavy industrial sector through production of industrial producer goods.²⁰ One of the contradictions that flowed from this approach was that often it was more profitable for rural communes to focus on industrial units geared to serving urban industries rather than agriculture. In 1959 an estimated 70 percent of income from commune enterprises came from industrial units, and the marketing of their output often favoured trade with urban industries (Riskin, 1971:260-61). The resulting emphasis on heavy industry as a significant component of rural industry was, however, combined with a lack of the capital and large-scale production resources necessary to produce high-quality output. The strategic choice of Leap planners was to rely on labour-intensive, small-scale production methods in rural or commune industry, while reserving capital-intensive, large-scale means for modern, urban enterprises. Labour drawn from both rural and urban areas was the key factor. The benefits of this approach were seen to exist on several levels.

²⁰ According to economist Choh-ming Li, locally-controlled industries represented 74 percent of all industrial units by 1959, reflecting the Leap's policies of decentralized administration. This can be compared to a 1957 figure of 54 percent under local control (cited in Wheelwright and McFarlane, 1970:60).

The advantages claimed for small-scale, labour-intensive methods of production included their ability to utilize dispersed deposits for material resources; their lower average capital output ratios and shorter gestation periods; their ability to undertake repairing, maintenance and processing activities, freeing large-scale capacity for jobs which the modern sector alone could do; lower costs of urbanization and social overhead capital in general; and a capacity to create "industrial consciousness" among the peasantry (Riskin, 1971:262).

Nevertheless, the costs of this strategy were soon felt, the most serious being the low quality of much of the output. The most blatant example of this was the pig iron produced by the 'backyard' steel furnaces, a product so poor in quality it often required resmelting. Yet as a component of overall steel production, its output was significant. Selden, for example, notes a 1958 steel output of 11 million tons, 3 million of which came from 'backyard' furnaces built by peasants (1979:100). The dismantling of rural steel production units throughout 1959, as Party leaders realized the drawbacks, was dramatic in its scope; their number decreased from a high of 1 million in October, 1958 to a mere 3,000 by October, 1960 (Selden, 1979:101).

Another factor in the establishment of rural industries was the disruption of simple commodity production of everyday consumer goods and agricultural implements brought about by the reorganization of handicraft production. By May 1959, only 13 percent of former handicraft cooperative members were still located in cooperative production arrangements; the rest had been transferred to commune factories and local industries (Riskin, 1971:264-65). The transfer of this labour, and agricultural labour as well, to small-scale industrial enterprises was significant in the detrimental effects it

had on rural consumer goods and agricultural production. Thus, while the movement to accelerate industrial production through decentralization was probably a factor in the high growth rates initially experienced by industry, the costs in terms of product quality and the drain on resources from other sectors of production soon led to a retreat from this campaign during the early 1960's.²¹ However, this did not mean abandoning rural industries entirely. While many of these units were closed, the state nevertheless attempted to rationalize rural industry by focusing more on technical inputs, integration with national planning goals and coordination with agricultural needs (Eckstein, 1977:128-29). One of the additional consequences of this rationalization scheme was to reintroduce a more centralized system of resource planning and allocation, exactly what Leap planners had argued was detrimental to mass initiative.

The wage policies and incentive structures of this period reflect the debate between right and left factions within the Party over the role of material incentives. Essentially the debate centred on the question of material vs. nonmaterial incentive structures, and the role played by central authorities in wage determination. Throughout this entire period the wage reforms of 1955-56 remained in

²¹ As Wheelwright and McFarlane (1970:43-49) point out often Western critics of the Leap have exaggerated the 'low-quality' argument to include all rural industry output, and underestimated the contribution made to rural self-sufficiency by these enterprises. Therefore the accumulated costs of this strategy, they argue, need to be fairly weighed against the very real gains in industrial growth rates.

place, creating in industry a graded wage system based upon skill and seniority. The advocates of nonmaterial incentive structures did not suggest abandoning income differences based upon these latter factors. Rather, they questioned the material bonuses designed to increase worker productivity, and the reliance on material incentives to plan labour allocations. During the Leap years this approach was reflected in several reforms, including the abolition of a piece-wage system in industry, the use of emulation campaigns to foster worker incentive, the decentralization of wage determination and administration to the enterprise level, and the use of direct labour transferrals to accomplish desired labour allocations. These were argued to be necessary measures for stemming capitalist or bourgeois tendencies in income distribution, and more in keeping with overall socialist principles. For example, in a 1958 magazine article, the authors summarized the problems with the piece-rate wage system in industry as follows:²²

The piece-rate system lends itself to the growth of bourgeois ideas among workers and enlarges contradictions between the state and workers, between the leadership and the masses. The piece-rate system inclines workers to set big store by their own material benefits, and chase after higher wages. It lends itself to individualism and economism among workers and to the tendency toward neglect of politics (quoted in Selden, 1979:451).

²² The article is 'Contradictions in the Piece-Rate System Enforced in Industrial Enterprises' by Liu Ch'eng-jui, Hung Sui-chih, Yang Chen, K'ang Tso-wu and Ko Liang-p'ing. It was originally published in *Chiao-hsueh yu Yen-chiu* on September 4, 1958 and Selden's source is the translated version appearing in *Extracts from China Mainland Magazines*, 1958:no. 153.

The solution proposed was one which combined monetary wages with a shift in emphasis towards collective rather than individual bonuses, and honourific rather than material rewards for increased productivity. In the conclusion to the same article, the authors clearly articulate this view:

The system of hour wages plus bonuses, which we recommend, is as follows: in addition to basic wages paid according to technical grades of workers, bonuses are to be paid to advanced workers and advanced units. Bonuses should be granted with honourary awards as the main thing and with material awards included; they should be granted mainly to collective bodies while awards to individuals are also to be included (quoted in Selden, 1979:453).

The resulting emphasis placed on the emulation of model workers for both technical factors such as fulfillment of productivity quotas, and political factors such as demonstration of proper 'socialist consciousness', became a target of criticism from Leap opponents. It was argued that over time the shift to nonmaterial incentives was a determinant in the reduction of worker morale and of productivity in industry. Consequently, during the early 1960's, state-determined material incentives were increasingly reintroduced in industry, including the former piece-rate system.²³

The actual effects of wage policy on income growth in industry during these years is difficult to demonstrate empirically. Aside from the 1960 statistical blackout which hampers all empirical analysis of the crisis years, the Leap years suffer from the decentralized nature of wage accounting and reporting. There simply

²³ Useful background material on the evolution of wage practices during the Leap and post-Leap period is available in Howe, 1973; Hoffman, 1967; and Eckstein, 1977.

Table 36: Growth Rates of Real and Money Wages of all Workers and Staff¹ and Industrial Workers and Staff, 1952-1963 (percent per annum).

	Money Wages		Real Wages	
	All workers and staff	Industrial workers and staff	All workers and staff	Industrial workers and staff
1952 - 1957	7.4	5.7	6.0	4.0
1957 - 1963	-0.8	-2	-2.1	-

SOURCE: Howe, 1971:34, Table 20

¹ Howe bases his data for the years 1952-59 on 'Ten Great Years' and a U.S. government publication in 1960, 'Average annual money earnings of workers and staff in Communist China.' Data for 1963 is an estimate based on data for worker and staff wages in Beijing alone. To construct estimates of real wages he used national and local indexes on retail prices and the cost of living published in various news releases.

² (-) indicates data not available.

did not exist a uniform system of wage administration by which the central authorities could accurately reflect average wage levels.²⁴ The State Statistical Bureau claimed an increase of 3 percent in average wages for workers and staff in 1958 over the preceding years, but it is probable the actual increase was lower (State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:211).²⁵ Table 36 presents estimates of the growth in monetary income compared to real income growth when cost of living increases are considered. Although breakdowns for industrial workers are not available, this evidence does indicate a considerable drop in the income of workers and staff when compared to the Five-Year Plan rates. The data, however, only reflect the overall impact between 1957 and 1963, without separate breakdowns for the Leap and post-Leap years. Howe, in his examination of planned wage increases for these years, does indicate that 1958 Leap planners allowed for a 1.6 percent increase in average wages of workers and staff, although he could find no evidence to indicate its fulfillment. The 1959 Plan allowed for no wage increases while 1960's Plan projected a 6 percent increase (Howe, 1971:57-58). The only other indication he offers of a changing approach is the wage

²⁴ One of the policies, for example, during the direct labour transfers of the Leap was that transferred workers and staff would maintain their previous salary in their new employment. The resulting income differentials within even the smallest work units of industrial enterprises made generalizations difficult (see Howe, 1971:95 for discussion).

²⁵ The officially-released figures for 1958 and 1959 do not include the new entrants to the labour force whose average wages would be lower. Therefore the official figures are most likely inflated.

reform policies of 1963 at the end of the crisis years. Although little information was officially released, it appears that the state attempted to re-centralize wage accounting procedures and to allow for a small increase in average wages (1971:95-96).

A continuing point of concern for state planners was the growth in urban population. As discussed in Chapter VII, the 1956 wage policy and overall focus of the Five-Year Plan on industrial expansion, had created an attraction for urban, nonagricultural employment. The increase in rural-urban migration, coupled with a decreasing capacity to absorb urban labour created a growing crisis in unemployment and various campaigns to return rural migrants to their homes. The situation intensified during the Leap years due to a variety of factors. On the one hand successive poor harvests in agriculture and increasingly heavy burdens placed on rural workers to increase accumulation for the state were a drawback in restricting migration. More importantly, the aims of the state to use vast reserves of labour as a means of accelerating economic growth created an expansion of the urban labour market. As a result the urban population increased as a proportion of the total population in comparison to the pre-Leap years (see Table 37).

The subsequent retrenchment in urban migration, formally endorsed by Zhou as part of the 1962 'ten points' of readjustment, took the form of forced out-migration of urban residents. Although the state did not release any aggregate figures on the number relocated, foreign press reports claimed a total exodus of 20 million during 1961 and 30 million during 1962 (cited in Emerson, 1967:422).

The implication of the state's actions is that the urban labour market was increasingly unable to absorb the influx of workers. While official estimates of unemployment are not available, Hou (1968) attempted to estimate male, nonagricultural unemployment for 1957-60.²⁶ He indicated that the rate of male nonagricultural employment decreased between 1957 and the end of 1958, and then sharply increased again in 1960. Specifically, 29 percent of the male nonagricultural labour force was unemployed in 1957, compared to 12.5 percent in 1958, 22.3 percent in 1959 and 26.3 percent in 1960 (Hou, 1968:369; Table 17). It would appear, then, that the mechanisms adopted to increase labour absorption rates were relatively successful in the early stages of the Leap, but faced increasing problems as the Leap progressed.

The impact of Leap policies on the structure of employment in nonagricultural labour is given in Table 38, comparing the final year of the Five-Year Plan with the peak Leap year of 1958.²⁷ Total

²⁶ It should be noted that his margin of error is increased by the fact that his figures are based on subtracting rough estimates of female employment from total employment. Nevertheless his estimates are useful if only for indicating trends in unemployment, if not actual figures. The figures here are based upon a male labour force between ages 15 and 59.

²⁷ Aggregate figures of nonagricultural employment were not released after 1958; therefore any estimates of employment after this period are very tentative. It is also significant to note that the figures on non-agricultural employment discussed in this section do not include two significant pools of labour; those engaged in mass labour projects (such as land reclamation drives and road-building projects), and those engaged in volunteer work for communal services (such as canteens and nurseries). The former was seasonal in nature, generally unpaid and not included in official employment surveys. The latter was also based upon 'drafted' surplus labour resources, unpaid and invisible in official surveys.

Table 37: Urban Population, 1957-60¹.

	Urban Population		Urban as % of Total Population
	Millions at Year end	Rate of Increase (%)	
1957	92.00	3.2	14.3
1958	107.64	17.0	16.2
1959	118.82	10.4	17.5
1960	130.00	10.9	18.9

SOURCE: Hou, 1968:342, Table 5.

¹ Hou bases his figures on a series of officially-released reports and internal press reports. He cautions that the figures for 1958-60 may be 'slightly' on the high side, although the demonstrated trend is consistent.

Table 38: Nonagricultural Employment by Branch of the Economy and Modern and Traditional Components, 1957-58 (in thousands).

Branch of economy and component	1957	1958
<u>Modern</u>		
Total	23,921	44,223
Material Production Branches	17,280	37,470
Industry	7,907	22,984
Water conservation	340	1,360
Capital construction	1,910	5,336
Transport, post and telecommunications	1,878	2,955
Trade, and the food and drink industry	5,245	4,835
Nonproductive Branches	6,641	6,753
Finance, banking and insurance	400	300
Education, medicine and cultural affairs	3,211	3,811
Government administration	1,698	1,183
Mass organizations	1,184	1,281
Urban public utilities	133	150
Meteorology	15	28
<u>Traditional</u>		
Total	15,746	12,644
Material Production Branches	13,673	10,448
Handicraft	6,560	1,465
Salt Extraction	500	700
Fishing	1,500	2,000
Transport, post and telecommunications	2,539	2,868
Trade, and the food and drink industry	2,574	2,665
Urban commune industry	0	750
Nonproductive Branches	2,073	2,196
Finance	221	100
Services	489	489
Traditional medicine	1,363	1,607

SOURCE: Emerson, 1967:464, Table A-4.

nonagricultural employment increased by 43 percent in 1958, to a labour force of 56.9 million (Emerson, 1967:438). The later dismantling of the Leap program inevitably had a significant impact on the structure of nonagricultural employment, but accurate estimates are not available. Emerson, for example, suggests that the forced exit of urban residents to rural areas in 1960 and 1961 "probably included" a minimum of 10 million persons previously employed in nonagricultural sectors, although he does not offer a firm basis for this estimate (1967:439). Nevertheless, estimates suggested by Hou indicate a 1959 decrease in the modern sector alone of almost 2 million workers and employees (Hou, 1968:356; Table 10).²⁸ The extent of retrenchment, however, is impossible to judge, and one can only point to the apparent consequences suggested by the transfers of urban labour, the curtailment of construction of large industrial enterprises and decreased capital investment. In addition, by 1961, the Minister of Labour Ma Wen-jui, was referring to labour surpluses in many industrial sectors and called for a freeze in industrial employment.²⁹ Finally, Emerson suggests that by 1964, after a period of economic recovery, nonagricultural employment reached 45.8 million, composed of 30.2 million workers and employees

²⁸ His estimate is based on a 1960 report citing employment increases compared to 1957. The report, "Highspeed and Proportionate Development of the National Economy", was written by Hsu Hsin-Hsueh and published in Red Flag (Feb. 1: no. 3, 1960).

²⁹ See Hou, 1968:354. The article by Ma which Hou refers to is 'The Problem of Labour in Building Socialism in Our Country', Red Flag (March 1: no. 5, 1961).

in the modern branch and 15.6 million persons in the traditional branch of the economy (1967:439, 468).³⁰ Although higher than the 1957 total of 39.7 million, it is significantly below the 1958 figure of 56.9 million.

The different patterns in expansion of employment experienced by different sectors can be seen to reflect the overall economic priorities of Leap planners. As shown in Table 38, the modern sector experienced rapid expansion while labour allocations in the traditional branch declined. Most of the latter decline can be explained by the transfer of handicraft labour to factory labour in the drive to increase producer goods output during the Leap. It is estimated that about 4.5 million persons were transferred in this sector in 1958-59, although the later restoration of handicraft production organized through cooperatives in the post-Leap years appears to have restored the 1957 level of employment. By 1961, full-time handicraft employment was estimated to be 6 million (Emerson, 1967:441-42).

Growth in the modern branch of the economy was virtually restricted to material production branches during the Leap period. The declining importance of the nonproductive branches is evident in their decline in proportion of total employment in the modern branch,

³⁰ This estimate should be used with caution as it is based upon two 1964 reports concerning the number of women workers and their proportion in the labour force as compared to 1957. Emerson then attempted to reconstruct an estimate of total nonagricultural employment from these figures. For further discussion of the method used, see Emerson, 1967:Appendix A, 468-69.

from 27.8 percent in 1957 to 15.3 percent in 1958.³¹ The increase of 20 million workers in material production, including those transferred from handicraft production and other branches of the economy, was disproportionately located in industrial sectors; the latter absorbing 15 million of the new workers.³² Approximately 7 million of these workers were allocated to the modern industrial enterprises, while the remaining 8 million were sent to staff the new small-scale enterprises which were characterized by traditional technologies and low capital resources (Emerson, 1965a:86).

A comparison distribution of industrial workers and employees in the main industrial sectors is presented in Table 39. Heavy industry accounted for 62.6 percent of industrial employment in 1958, an increase of 10 percent over 1957. Light industry, on the other hand, experienced a significant decline from 32.6 percent of industrial employment in 1957 to 13 percent in 1958. It is evident that the structural composition of the industrial labour force reflected the goals of the state regarding acceleration of producer goods output. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this orientation was to shift in the post-Leap years with the state encouraging the expansion of light industry and consumer goods output over heavy industry. There are no figures available between 1959 and 1962 on the actual impact of this policy shift in specific sector

³¹ Based on calculations from figures given in Table 38.

³² Aside from the 4.5 million persons transferred from handicraft production, 1.3 million workers and employees from the modern branch were transferred to the industrial sector (Emerson, 1967:444).

Table 39: Workers and Employees by Branch of Industry, 1957-58
(percent distribution).

Branch of Industry	1957	1958
1. Heavy Industry:		
Electric Power	1.8	1.1
Coal	8.5	10.9
Petroleum	.8	.6
Iron and Steel	4.4	14.4
Nonferrous metals, mining and processing	4.4	3.2
Metal processing	17.7	18.3
Chemical processing	3.2	3.5
Building materials	7.6	5.7
Timber	4.2	4.9
2. Light Industry:		
Papermaking	1.2	.4
Textiles	16.2	6.5
Food processing	15.2	6.1
Total	85.2	75.6

SOURCE: Emerson, 1967:467, Table A-6.

allocations, although both Hou and Emerson argue that overall industrial employment fell sharply. Emerson, for example, offers tentative estimates of an industrial labour force of 14 million in the post-crisis year in 1965, a population 9 million less than that in 1958 (1967:445).

The profile which emerges of the nonagricultural sphere during the Leap and post-Leap years can be summarized as reflecting the shifting goals of the state. During the Great Leap Forward high growth rates in industry, particularly producer-goods industries, were associated with both increased capital investment and high labour inputs. The dramatic expansion of the employed nonagricultural labour force was evident particularly in heavy industrial sectors. The more vulnerable sectors, which experienced either no growth or relative decline, were light industry and service occupations. The decentralization of small-scale industry was a significant factor in industrial growth and labour opportunities, although the costs in quality-control and centralized planning ability soon became apparent. Finally, the increased size of the urban population, as a result of the state's labour policies, placed increasing strain on the state in terms of direct and indirect maintenance costs.

As a response to a growing economic crisis, partially brought about by the spill-over effects of agricultural crises, the critics of the Leap plan engineered a retrenchment on several fronts. State investment decreased, as well as shifted in priority to agriculture and light industry. Industrial production fell sharply as many

small-scale industries were closed and others reorganized. Material incentives took priority over normative ones as the state attempted to boost sagging productivity, and urban surpluses were dealt with through forced migration policies. Finally, nonagricultural unemployment increased as labour opportunities in the modern branches declined.

2. The Agricultural Sector

At the beginning of the Leap period, state planners were faced with a relatively stagnant agricultural sector, complicated by decreasing peasant productivity and increasing peasant activity in private agricultural production. In order to achieve the state's high projections for agricultural expansion, a radically new institutional structure was required to coordinate the accelerated development projects. This new structure, the rural commune, became the basic administrative unit for the organization of all economic activities, including agriculture, small industry and consumer services such as food preparation and childcare. The state's concern in establishing a framework for agricultural communization was to both increase the capacity for surplus production through the efficient management of surplus labour, and to restrict the drain of labour resources and capital accumulation to the private sphere of production.

The rapid pace at which rural communes were organized during the summer and fall of 1958 is indicated in Table 40. By the end of 1958, 99.1 percent of all peasant households were organized in communes which averaged about 4,600 households in size. The former

Table 40: Distribution and Size of Rural Communes (1958)

	End of August	Early September	Mid September	Late September	End of December
Number of Communes	8,730	12,824	16,989	26,425	26,578
% of all peasant households in communes	30.4	48.1	65.3	98.0	99.1
Average number of households in communes	4,328	4,662	4,781	4,614	4,637

SOURCE: State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:43.

APCs, launched during the earlier collectivization campaign, became large production brigades within the new commune, while former production brigades were reorganized as production teams.

Modifications to commune administration were introduced in early 1959 as disappointing harvest figures were tallied and criticisms against excessive centralization of administration were mounting. The most important revisions announced in the Wuhan Resolution,³³ of December, 1958 concerned the distribution of wages and the role of private subsidiary production. As discussed earlier in the Chapter, communal income in 1958 was based on a system of part wages and part supplies, instituting a principle of payment according to need. In addition, the commune withheld larger proportions of communal income for capital investment, distributing a smaller relative share to members. As Schran notes, in some model communes between 40 and 60 percent of communal earnings were withheld, although more common targets were between 15 and 20 percent (1969:36). Members of the commune were individually classified according to ranked labour grades similar to those used in industrial establishments. Finally, the communization of private production plots and tools prevented the commune member from supplementing his or her communal earnings through subsidiary production. Reacting to the apparent disincentive effect created by this system, the Wuhan Resolution endorsed an incentive structure which gave priority to

³³ See 'Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes' in Bowie and Fairbank (eds.):1962;488-503. Their text is the officially-released translation.

wages over supplies and allowed for private ownership of small agricultural plots and production implements. As a consequence the wage portion of earnings rose considerably in 1959. In one commune noted by Schran for example, wages increased from 30 percent to 62 percent of total compensation payments to the average commune member between 1958 and 1959 (1969:37). In addition family agricultural production-for-use revived on a small scale, and minor subsidiary handicraft production reappeared.

The temporary suspension of many of the Wuhan reforms in early 1960 during the period of shifting political power balances led to a recollectivization of private plots and the abolition of rural free markets (Larsen, 1967:220). Nevertheless, by late 1960 agricultural failures were reaching acute proportions and readjustment was necessary. While the commune remained as the basic institutional structure for rural economic development, its organization changed considerably. Power was increasingly transferred to lower levels of administration such as the production team. Ownership of land and production implements was vested in the production brigade and private plots, accounting for 5 percent of arable land were permitted (Larsen, 1967:221). In November of 1960 the Central Committee issued a secret directive to Party cadres at all levels.³⁴ This 'Urgent Directive on Rural Work' instructed _____

³⁴ I have been unable to locate an official translation of this directive and have relied on two secondary sources. Selden (1979:516-17) based his translation on Japanese materials and Chang (1978:128) relied on a summary provided by the Nationalist Chinese authorities.

cadres to reduce the authority of commune level administration, oppose "absolute egalitarianism" and unnecessary transfer of workers, restore private plots and family subsidiary production, and reopen rural free markets. Other orders concerning reductions in tax deductions were suggested as a means to increase peasant income. The most important points, however, in this directive concerned the re-introduction of rural free markets and private production plots. In various speeches following this secret directive, Party leaders began to encourage the relaxation of restrictions of rural markets and suggest the advantages of private sideline production.³⁵ This change in direction was also reflected in various newspaper and periodical articles which linked the role of private production to bolstering the collective economy:

For the time being, we cannot take care of all the odd needs of commune members. . . . But the odd needs of commune members are essential and must be met. The best way of meeting these needs is to allocate small private plots to members for cultivation with the object of making up the deficiency of the collective economy (Chin, 1961:11-12).

With agricultural productivity at the current level of development, the commune members should be allowed to operate domestic subsidiary production and cultivate private plots, and to develop trade at rural fairs. This benefits not only the individual commune members. What is more important is that it also benefits the State (Kuan, 1961:15).

The position of the state under retrenchment was quite clear; in order to recoup agricultural losses it was deemed necessary to

³⁵ See, for example, Chu Teh's speech to a 1961 Central Work Conference and Liu's speech to an October, 1961 Conference on blackmarket dealings. Both are referred to in Lieberthal, 1976:164, 176.

revert to more traditional incentive structures which permitted the coexistence of a collective and household agricultural production economy. The extent to which the shift in policy measures had an impact on industrial productivity, when compared to agricultural productivity, can be analyzed in Table 41. While experiencing a fairly significant increase in the first year of communization, agricultural output dropped sharply in 1959 and continued to drop until 1962 when it began to experience signs of recovery. The spill-over effects of the agricultural crisis are evident in the fact that industrial production continued to experience significant growth (particularly in the steel sector) until 1961 when it sharply declined.

One of the more significant effects of the Great Leap Forward strategy was felt in the structure of agricultural employment. As already discussed, the aim of the state was to increase agricultural growth largely through an all-out mobilization of labour power in rural areas. At the same time the move towards rural industrialization, discussed in the previous section, required the diversion of more and more workers for agricultural production. The consequence for agricultural employment was a marked increase in the number of average labour days worked by the peasants. In Table 42 it is evident that the share of employed peasants increased substantially during the Leap, in addition to the actual number of labour days worked. Moreover, as demonstrated in Table 43, communal services (such as dining halls, nurseries and laundries) and commune industry absorbed an increasing share of those labour days. The strategic

Table 41: Comparison of Agricultural and Industrial Performance Indicators, 1957-62¹

	Agricultural Production Index	Industrial Production Index	Grain Output (million metric tons)	Steel Output (million metric tons)
1957	100	100	185	5.3
1958	108	142	200	11.1
1959	83	173	165	13.4
1960	78	181	160	18.7
1961	77	105	160	8.0
1962	92	111	180	8.0

SOURCE: Selden, 1979:135, Table 13, columns 3-6.

¹ Selden's data sources are United States government-compiled data. Specifically he relies on publications by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (People's Republic of China: Handbook of Economic Indicators, Washington:1976), the U.S. Department of Commerce (The Chinese Economy and Foreign Trade Perspective, 1976, Washington:1977) and the Joint Economic Committee of Congress (China: A Reassessment of the Economy, Washington: 1975).

Table 42: Rural Population, Employment and Labour Days, 1957-59

	Peasant Population (millions)	Total Peasants Employed (millions)	Average Annual Labour Days	Total Annual Labour Days (billions)
1957	541.3	260.3	159.5	41.5
1958	550.5	271.3	174.6	47.5
1959	539.6	309.1	189.0	58.4
Change 1957-59	-1.7	+48.8	+29.5	+16.9

SOURCE: Gurley, 1976:244; Schran, 1969:47, 75 and Selden, 1979:84.

Table 43: The Structure of Rural Employment by Labour Days, 1957-59
(Index: Total Labour Days in 1952 = 100.0).

	Total Labour Days	Farm Work	Subsidiary Work	Corvee Basic Construction	Collective Affairs	Commune Services	Commune Industry
1957	152.8	113.4	25.8	9.7	3.8	—	—
1958	174.7	120.3	28.8	10.9	4.2	6.7	3.9
1959	215.0	151.7	29.5	12.3	4.4	9.5	7.5

SOURCE: Schran, 1969:75.

mobilization of underutilized labour (most particularly female labour power, as will be discussed later) and the extension of average labour days worked were thus the key mechanisms deployed for agricultural growth. Nevertheless the main problem faced in this strategy was the increasing shortage of agricultural labour in the face of high migration to urban areas and increasing demands for industrial labour power. The shortage of farm labour was particularly acute given the high demands placed on the agricultural sector for serving an ever-expanding urban population (see Table 37).

The progressive retreat from Leap labour policies accelerated throughout 1961 as mass labour projects were discouraged, communal dining services abandoned, commune industry often dismantled and attention refocused on agriculture. The new policy was to utilize only 5 percent of the available labour force for commune or brigade-level projects; the rest was allocated to production team management. More importantly, production teams were instructed to allocate at least 80 percent of that labour to agricultural work during the busy seasons (see Larsen, 1967:220-222 and Walker, 1968:446-47). As a result, by the end of 1962 a restabilization of pre-Leap labour-use patterns had taken place in the agricultural sphere.

The overall performance of agriculture through the Leap and post-Leap years did not manage to meet the high expectations of state planners. While natural factors outside of political control most certainly played a role in facilitating agricultural failures, the state also faced the problem of creating efficient incentive

mechanisms. The conflict within the party leadership over the direction these incentives should take was reflected in the contradictory and fluctuating policies implemented by the commune. Moreover, the continuing emphasis on industrial expansion placed demands on labour and capital resources which restricted the ability of agriculture to expand significantly. The optimism of the state in radical institutional restructuring was placed in its establishment of the rural commune. By bringing all household members and activities into the collective sphere, the assumption was that more labour time would be made available for social production for the state. To the extent that a great deal of underutilized labour was put to use the Leap planners were successful. When this increased labour use was combined, however, with decreasing income and increasing state accumulation, a disincentive effect resulted. The displacement of the household as a unit of production and a unit of accumulation which the Great Leap Forward created, was directly challenged in the later retreat on policies concerning private production. Once again, the state reverted to a development plan which gave recognition to independent household production and accumulation. The reconciliation of this tolerance for a private sector with a collective economy is clearly expressed in a newspaper article of this period:

Private plots of land, like family side-occupations, are indispensable, supplementary parts of the socialist collective economy. . . . Judging by our country's economic system and the level of her economic development and by various other facts including the characteristics of private plots of land, I am of the opinion that the plots of land reserved for the private use of members of our rural people's communes pose no problem now or in the future, as

to whether they are a remnant of capitalist, or individual, system of private ownership. They are entirely socialist in character (Yao, 1961:9-10).

D. Sex Subordination and the Two-Line Struggle

The different approaches to economic development between 1958 and 1962 led to, as noted in the previous sections, different contexts for agricultural and industrial growth. The intersection of the state's variable objectives in economic policy with the character of sex subordination during this period is the focus of discussion in the following section. The nature of the sex division of labour in both social production and domestic labour can be understood in terms of its relationship to the distinctive intentions underlying state policy regarding material production.

1. Women in Social Production

The extent to which women entered social production, and the conditions under which they entered, varied throughout this period in both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors of the economy. In the agricultural sector, the impact of rural communization upon the rate of female participation in agricultural labour is of particular importance. Table 44 indicates reconstructed estimates of the number of women working in the agricultural sector between 1957 and 1964.³⁶ It is significant to note the rapid increase in female agricultural participation between the end of the Plan Period and following the

³⁶ Given the lack of accurate aggregate data, it is important to take these figures as representing apparent trends in participation, rather than actual measurements of the number of women working.

Table 44: Estimated Number of Women Working in Agriculture as a Proportion of the Female Agricultural Population, 1957-1964

Year	Estimated Number Working (thousands)	Female Agricultural Population ¹ (thousands)	Estimated Proportion Working of Total (percentage)	
			Low	High
1957	70,000 - 100,000	128,700	54.4	77.7
1958	110,000 - 145,000	128,500	85.6	112.9
1959	110,000 - 145,000	129,300	85.1	112.1
1960	95,000 - 120,000	129,400	73.4	92.7
1961-64	70,000 - 95,000	— ²	—	—

SOURCE: Column 1 - Thorborg, 1978:585; Table 6. Her estimates are based on a comparison of official and nonofficial estimates and suggest only a broad range of participation rates. Her estimates for 1958 and 1959, and 1961-64 are not tabulated annually.

Column 2 - See Table 9.

¹ Based on women of working age 15-59. Includes agricultural occupations only, both agricultural and subsidiary occupations, and subsidiary occupations only.

² (—) indicates data not available.

spread of rural communes in 1958. It is apparent from the higher estimates for 1958-59 that the Leap mobilized women who were not traditionally accounted for in the official agricultural population tabulations. This can be attributed to the mass mobilization drives which brought women over the age of 59 into collective labour, often working in the communal services sector. The slight retrenchment in 1960 as Leap policies came under open attack, was followed by a sharp drop in the number of women working in 1960. This decline in female agricultural participation, which signalled a return to pre-Leap participation rates continued throughout the crisis years and the post-Leap stabilization years of 1963-64. Although comparable population figures are not offered by Hou beyond 1960, Thorborg's own estimates assume a participation rate of between 50 and 60 percent for the early 1960s, (1978:584). One can relate this dramatic shift in agricultural participation to the variable labour demands of this sector between 1958 and 1962. The goal of Leap planners was to mobilize all underutilized labour power in rural areas, while at the same time diverting some agricultural labour to rural industries. This created a favourable context for significantly increasing the productive role played by women. While the organizational changes which facilitated their mass entrance into collective labour will be discussed later, it is important to note that the communal services provided under the rural commune system were the major mechanism used by the state to mobilize female labour reserves--both as a source of employment for many women and as a means to free the time of other women for agricultural and subsidiary tasks. The retrenchment

policies of the crisis years, however, led to a sharp cutback in such services in addition to a decline in demand for rural industrial labour. As a result, inadequate support services combined with an increased flow of male labour back to agricultural production led to a relative decrease in demand for female agricultural labour. Some evidence of this impact can be seen, for example, in an official news release which indicated that the mass drives in capital construction projects in 1959 had resulted in a female agricultural work force which constituted 60 to 80 percent of all agricultural labour. However, a later news release for 1960 estimated women comprised only 45 percent of all agricultural labour, a proportion approximately the same as that of 1955.³⁷

The increased demand for labour during the Great Leap Forward was reflected not only in the increasing numbers of women entering social production; it also led to an increase in the amount of labour each worker performed. In 1957, the Revised Draft Program on Agricultural Development had suggested a range of between 80 and 180 days for average female agricultural participation.³⁸ Obviously this policy left a good deal of scope for tapping underutilized labour if additional labour burdens on women could be alleviated through organizational restructuring of household tasks. Table 45, which is based on three different sample studies, compares the average number

³⁷ The two releases are cited in Thorborg (1978:586). The source for the first is Wen Hui Pao (1961,3:9) and for the second is Ta Kung Pao (1961,3:8).

³⁸ See Chapter VII for discussion.

Table 45: Average Annual Number of Labour Days in Agricultural Production Cooperatives and Rural People's Communes, 1957-59.

Year	Average Annual Number of Labour Days		
	Total	Men	Women
1957 ¹	161	204	105
1958/59 I ²	276	— ³	—
1958 II ⁴			
Required	318	336	300
Expected	302	319	285

SOURCE: Schran, 1969:69, Table 3.11.

¹ Figures are based on a sample of 228 advanced producer cooperatives, nationwide. Cited in T'ung-chi Yen-chiu, No. 8 (1958), p. 8.

² Figure is based on a study of the Wu Ai Large Brigade. Cited in Nung-ts'un Kung-tso T'ung-hsun, No. 6 (1959), p. 7.

³ (—) indicates that breakdowns by sex are not available.

⁴ Figures are based on a study of the Ch'ang Feng Commune. Cited in Lao-tung, No. 2 (1959), p. 20.

⁵ Schran notes that although a norm of a certain number of days was established, an actual attendance of 95% was the expectation (1969:72-73).

of labour days for men and women in cooperatives in 1957 and communes in 1958-59. It is apparent from these figures that not only did the total number of labour days in collective production increase, but the gap between the men and the women narrowed dramatically. Whereas in 1957 women worked approximately 50 percent of what men worked in rural production, in 1958-59 the norm was almost 90 percent.

The extent to which this pattern continued in the post-Leap years is uncertain, although the little evidence there is available suggests that it did not. Nevertheless, it does appear that female participation did not decline to the pre-Leap figures. Thorborg, for example, cites a 1960 news release referring to 166 labour days for women and 249 for men as an annual average (1978:595). If indicative of actual practice, this would represent a decline in female participation, relative to male participation, to 67 percent. This decline in female labour days can be partially attributed to the increase in female responsibility for domestic labour as communal services were withdrawn. As will be discussed shortly, household labour was progressively defined in the post-Leap period as the responsibility of the individual woman. What is significant about the shifting pattern in the female share of agricultural labour days, is the implication for the degree of female integration in rural labour. During the mass labour drives characteristic of the Great Leap Forward and the accompanying provision of collective domestic services the permanence of female participation in labour was enhanced. The vulnerability of these support structures during periods of economic decline, however, led to parallel vulnerability

in rural women's share of productive labour as their labour burden in the domestic sphere increased.

The type of labour which women engaged in relative to men is an important indicator of the nature of sex subordination throughout this period. Unfortunately, little information on task allocation is available in terms of quantitative data. Nevertheless, various accounts are available in news articles and organizational documents which suggest that task division by sex was the norm in labour allocations.³⁹ It is clear, for example, that the labour participation of women in communes was defined as more appropriate for agricultural production, rather than ~~rural~~ industry. As males were drawn increasingly into the expanding spheres of local industry and capital construction projects, women were tapped to replace the lost labour power. In a 1959 news release commenting on women's role in rural communes, this sex division of labour was positively endorsed.

The rural people's communes engage in all forms of production, but women take part mostly in agricultural production. When the male labour force has been transferred to industry, water conservancy construction, and capital construction, it is for the women to take up the greater part of the work in agricultural production. . . . In Wheihsing (Satellite) People's Commune, Kaoan hsien, Kiangsi, last autumn, 7,000 to 8,000 men out of the total male labour force of 9,700 men went to smelt iron and build water conservancy projects. The work of autumn harvesting and winter sowing in respect to the 204,000 mou

³⁹ See, for example, the New China News Agency release for January 4, 1959. In an article entitled "Chinese Women's Achievements in 1958", the range of agricultural tasks performed by women is described. It is noted that the women were valuable because they "replaced many men who were able to turn to production in other fields" (1959:2).

of land was mainly entrusted to the women numbering 9,400 or more (Wang Yin, 1959:8-9).

The official Party line in this period was that a sex division of labour was a necessary and strategic mechanism for efficiently allocating labour power. In a 1959 speech by Central Committee member T'an Chen-lin this perspective on women's role in production was articulated.

This year the women of China played a great role in the great leap, especially in agricultural production. This situation will develop and women will take up the duty of becoming the principal force in agricultural production. . . . In general these industrial departments (of iron and steel) use mostly male labour and offer few types of work that women workers can do (T'an Chen-lin cited in Thorborg, 1978:506).

The other significant sector of women's rural employment was in the various communal services established by the state in order to release the labour power of women workers. As Schran notes, this sector absorbed approximately 20 percent of all employed women in 1958 (1969:61). The collectivization of domestic services brought women into productive labour both as employees in these facilities and as beneficiaries of the support services. However, the identification of this labour with women rather than men merely extended the traditional association of women with private domestic labour to the collective sphere. The fact that women constituted the majority of this labour sector was not defined as problematic; rather, it was treated as a natural outcome of female traditional skills. In a commentary on collective services in a 1959 news release, it was noted almost in passing that women supplied the necessary labour power:

Statistical returns show that to date, there are 2,650,000 mess halls in the rural people's communes in the country serving meals to 90 percent of the total rural population. There are 4,750,000 nurseries and kindergartens, taking care of 24,000,000 children. . . . In the social welfare undertakings operated by the people's communes, especially in the mess halls, the nurseries, and the maternity homes, most of the personnel are women (Wang Yin, 1959:8-9).

Overall, the collective services of the communes employed more than 15 million persons in 1958, 75 percent of whom are women. More importantly, these workers were usually paid very low wages or else nothing for their labour (Emerson, 1965:6).

The reintroduction of private plots and the encouragement of private subsidiary production in the aftermath of the Leap were reflected in the return of women to pre-Leap traditional tasks. Andors describes the increasing involvement of women in private animal husbandry, manure collection (for private plot fertilization) and home-based handicraft production during the early 1960s (Andors, 1976:109). The reactivation of household production as commune services disappeared was actively encouraged by various Party organizations. The explicit policy was to maintain collective production as primary while encouraging family production and consumption efficiency to relieve strains on the collective economy. The role of women in this strategy is reflected in a resolution of the Guangdong Provincial Women's Congress in March, 1962. The Congress defined their task in these terms:

Both in cities and in rural areas, we should, with positive participation in collective production as the premise, appropriately develop family subsidiary occupations and handicrafts as local conditions permit. We must also be good at managing livelihood; we must work out careful calculations with regard to food, clothing and articles of everyday use (Nan-fang Jin-pao, 1962:3).

The increased potential that sideline family production offered in terms of family income can be seen as an important factor in the state's policy reversals on private production. Moreover, it is not surprising that female household members would play a significant role in this sector as their participation in communal services declined,⁴⁰ and as the failure of rural industrial enterprises sent males back to the agricultural sector. Generally, however, it was attributed to traditional acquired skills. In a 1959 newspaper article, for example, it was argued that:

Up to the present, as far as needlework and household work are concerned, women are still more capable than men. Rural young women should therefore take the initiative in developing this special skill. . . . By starting from learning needlework they should be able to run their home with industry and economy and continue their share of contributing to the building of our mother country on the foundation of industry and economy (Chung-Kuo Ch'ing-nien, cited in Andors, 1976:108).

The impact that these labour allocation strategies had on female earning potential is an additional factor for consideration. In Table 46, the distribution of male and female agricultural workers by wage grades in one sample commune is given. The adoption of the wage grade system in communes was built upon the labour-day system used in the earlier APCs.⁴¹ In other words for each full labour-day worked there was assigned a range of work points, based upon the wage grade for which the worker was classified. For example, the lowest

⁴⁰ Schran notes that by the end of 1959 the proportion of working women in this sector had declined to 10 percent of all working women in rural production (1969:62).

⁴¹ For extended discussion, see Hoffman, 1968:483-87.

wage grade of one would receive usually four work points/labour days while the highest wage grade of seven would receive ten work points/labour days. The monthly accumulated work points would then be used to calculate the worker's basic income plus supplies. As demonstrated in Table 46, female agricultural workers were overrepresented in the lowest three grades, comprising almost 80 percent of the lowest category. More importantly, 68.5 percent of all female agricultural workers were concentrated in the lowest three grades, compared to 39.7 percent of the males. Conversely, less than one percent of females were found in the highest wage grade, compared to almost 10 percent of male workers. The differentials can be explained by both the tendency to allocate female workers to lower-valued tasks in agriculture, and the policy of using males in local industry, where higher wage grades prevailed.⁴² In other words, the sectoral allocation of labour which was premised on the sex division of labour had the consequence of channelling women into sectors of lower remuneration. Moreover, the abolition of private plots and independent sideline production during the Leap years made outside sources of income inaccessible. What is distinctive about this wage system is its effect in transferring all family income sources to the collective sphere, but on the basis of individual rather than household accounting units. The motivation for this strategy was integrally related to the problems faced by the state at the end of

⁴² See Schran, 1969:167-180 for elaboration.

Table 46: Distribution of 1,453 Agricultural Workers by Wage Grades in Sun Yen Production Brigade, 1958 (in percent).

Wage Grade	Distribution in each grade		Proportion in each grade	
	Total	Males	Females	Females
1	12.4	5.8	18.4	22.2
2	16.0	12.7	18.9	38.0
3	26.4	21.2	31.2	38.3
4	23.4	23.1	23.7	47.0
5	9.5	14.1	5.3	71.0
6	7.5	13.4	2.1	85.3
7	4.8	9.7	.4	95.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	

SOURCE: Hoffmann, 1968:485, Table 1.

¹ Data based on report in Ts'ai-ching Yen-chiu (Financial and Economic Research), Peking, No. 1:Jan. 15, 1959.

the Five-Year Plan. Confronted by a rising private sector which detracted from work in the collective sphere and hence reduced state accumulation possibilities, the state sought to transfer all household labour power to the collective sphere. The resulting instability of this strategy on peasant incentive, exacerbated by natural agricultural crises, has already been discussed. The resulting readjustment by the state led to a revival of independent household production and the subsequent pooling of income from both collective and private spheres. But what is important to both of these strategies is the fact that a sex division of labour in terms of task and sector allocation is a feature common to each.

The development of the 'equal pay debate' throughout this period is symptomatic of the state's approach to incentive structures. As Thorborg notes, the CCP continued to endorse in principle the idea of equal pay for equal work but it was not relied upon as a strategy for mobilizing women for production, as had been the case at points during the Five-Year Plan (1978:540-48). Rather the whole approach taken during the Great Leap was to encourage devotion and self-sacrifice. In the following editorial for example, women are exhorted to treat as secondary the question of 'fair' wages:

Women of the whole country should continue to develop our tradition of building our motherland in a thrifty way and put the interest of our country first and our own second, cherish the Communist attitude of labour without arguing about the compensation (People's Daily, February 5, 1960; cited in Thorborg, 1978:548).

The crisis years following the Leap were characterized by a continuing need for agricultural labour, but a decline in both normative appeals and support structures to encourage mobilization. In that context, Thorborg found a renewed emphasis on equal pay arguments in the media and explicit links drawn to the mobilization of women.⁴³ This is also reflected in the materials used for instructing female Party cadres on proper educational techniques among female peasants (see Thorborg, 1978:548-49). In an extract from a report on a rural work symposium, for example, the consequence of unequal pay policies is specifically linked to decreasing participation of women in production:

Consequently it has restricted the enthusiasm of women labourers for collective labour, prevented women from playing their corresponding role in the development of collective production and in the creation of material wealth for society (Quian Xian, cited in Croll, 1974:73).

The shifting parameters of women's role in agricultural production throughout the Leap and post-Leap years was also reflected in their participation in the nonagricultural sphere. Their entrance into this sphere was set in the context of economic growth patterns described earlier in the chapter. During the Leap, a rapid expansion of the nonagricultural labour force, provoked by increased capital investment and labour allocation policies, was evident most strongly in industrial sectors. In addition, a rapidly expanding urban

⁴³ Nevertheless, she also notes that sex differentials in agricultural wages continued unabated. Commune documents for 1962 indicated that the lowest wage grade male worker received the same wages as the highest wage grade female worker (Thorborg, 1978:549).

population and an increased need for collective support services placed serious demands on the state. The retrenchment years were reflected in a decreased investment in industry and a retraction in overall industrial production. The consequence was a rise in nonagricultural unemployment and an attempt to reduce the demands of urban dwellers through forced migration to rural areas. The nonagricultural labour opportunities for women can be analyzed in terms of the restrictions by these factors.

The numbers of women found in nonagricultural occupations during the Great Leap Forward are compared to figures for the end of the Five-Year Plan Period in Table 47. The total number of women in nonagricultural employment increased by approximately 3.5 million between 1957 and 1959, with a relative decline in the role they played in the traditional sector from 60 percent of all female nonagricultural employment in 1957 to 34 percent in 1959. In other words, the employment increases were reflected solely in state sector employment while many traditional occupations, particularly handicraft manufacture, were reorganized under state management. As a consequence not all occupational increases indicated for 1958 represent 'new' employment opportunities for women; rather they indicate the transfer of labour from one sector to another. It is significant to note that the actual proportion of women in total nonagricultural employment appears to have declined slightly during 1958. In Table 48, the available estimates suggest a two percent decline in overall female nonagricultural employment even though there was a two percent increase in their proportion among the modern

sector of workers and employees.⁴⁴ What this suggests is the fact that women's previous concentration in the traditional sector made employment vulnerable when that sector experienced a relative decline as a result of Leap policies. Their concentration in a declining sector of employment was also not completely compensated by the expansion of labour opportunities in the modern sector of the nonagricultural economy. Within the traditional sector the largest concentration of women was found in service occupations and handicraft occupations, representing respectively 39 percent and 21 percent of traditional female employment (based on calculations in Table 47).

The slight increase in the proportion of women in the modern branch of workers and employees, suggested by Table 48, must be qualified by recognizing the reclassification of handicraft workers as industrial workers and employees which occurred during the Leap. Emerson notes that this administrative transfer included 1.4 million women: without this 'paper transfer' their proportion relative to male workers and employees was about the same as 1957--13.7 percent (1965 b:5). Finally, of the total increase in nonagricultural employment of 17.2 million during 1958, less than 20 percent were women (Emerson, 1965 b:5). The important implication of these estimates is that the rapid and massive expansion in nonagricultural

⁴⁴ Emerson's estimates suggest a one percent increase in total female non-agricultural employment. This is largely due to the fact that he excludes from his 1957 estimate of female employment the category of personal services. Hence, his overall estimate for 1957 is slightly less than Hou's, although they agree on 1958 estimates.

Table 47: Nonagricultural Employment: Female, 1957-59
(thousands).

	1957	1958	1959
Total ¹	7,924	10,115	11,401
Workers and Employees	3,286	7,000	8,286
State farms and forestry	99	700	700
Nonworkers and Employees ²	4,737	3,815	3,815 ³
i) Handicrafts	2,192	795	—
ii) Salt Extraction	200	350	—
iii) Fishing	150	650	—
iv) Transportation: junks	86	90	—
v) Trade, food and drink	609	430	—
vi) Personal and professional services	1,500	1,500	—

SOURCE: Hou, 1968:371, Table 18.

¹ Total represents Workers and Employees plus Nonworkers and Employees. State farm and forestry workers are subtracted from the category of Workers and Employees by Hou.

² Employment category used to distinguish those persons working in traditional sectors of nonagricultural economy, outside of state sector employment.

³ Data for traditional occupations in 1959 is not available by sector, and Hou has assumed there was no growth in the overall category.

Table 48: Female Nonagricultural Employment as a percentage of total,
and of workers and employees, 1957-58.

	1957	1958
Total Nonagricultural Employment (thousands)	39,667	56,867
Female Nonagricultural Employment (thousands)	7,924	10,115
Female as % of Total	20.0	17.8
Total Workers and Employees (thousands)	23,921	44,223
Female Workers and Employees (thousands)	3,286	7,000
Female as % of Total	13.7	15.8

SOURCE: Line 1 and 4 derived from Table 38.

Line 2 and 5 derived from Table 47.

Table 49: Employment in Nonagricultural Material Production; Percent Distribution by Sex and Branch, 1957 and 1958.

Material Production Branches	1957		1958	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Handicraft and carrier service	70.0	30.0	70.0	30.0
Salt extraction	60.0	40.0	50.0	50.0
Fishing	90.0	10.0	67.5	32.5
Industry	82.7	17.3	81.8	18.2
Water conservancy	— ¹	—	90.0	10.0
Capital construction	—	—	85.5	14.5
Transport, posts and telecommunications	—	—	93.4	6.6
Trade, and the food and drink industry	87.9	12.1	88.0	12.0

SOURCE: Emerson, 1965b:26, Table 2.

¹ (—) indicates no data available.

employment during the Leap, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, did not significantly alter the relative position of women in labour force participation in this sector. This can partially be understood in terms of the sex allocation of nonagricultural labour which was already firmly entrenched by the end of the Five-Year Plan. A significant reflection of this sectoral allocation by sex can be found in the integration of women into industrial employment.

In Table 49, the distribution of men and women in nonagricultural material production is given for 1957 and 1958. These estimates indicate both the continuing relative subordination of women in material production sectors and the lack of gains made in the important sector of industry. Their proportional increases in salt extraction and fishing are interesting in light of the labour intensive nature of these sectors and their location in the traditional branch of the economy. As demonstrated in Table 38, total industrial employment tripled between 1957 and 1958, however, the proportion of women remained almost the same (including the 'increase' brought about by the administrative reorganization of handicraft manufacture.) The failure of women to increase their relative share of industrial employment is explained by Emerson as a function of the location of new industrial opportunities. The majority of the 10 million new industrial positions were located in heavy industry, a sector in which female employment was marginal. For example, in the light industrial branches of textiles and food processing, where the work force was almost 70 percent women, new positions amounted to just over four hundred thousand in 1958.

However, in the coal, iron and steel, and metal processing sectors, traditionally dominated by male industrial workers, 6.6 million new jobs were created. As a result, women comprised only 8.3 percent of the newly-hired workers in industry during the Great Leap (Emerson, 1967:434).

One industrial sector in which women did dominate, however, was street industry (also referred to as urban commune industry). Built upon the existing framework of small-scale, 'autonomous enterprises' which spread throughout urban areas between 1956 and 1957, street industry was collectively organized by the state during the Great Leap. Useful as a means for facilitating consumer goods production, this sector employed two million people in 1959 and 1960, 85 percent of whom were women (Emerson, 1965b:9). Articles in the national and provincial media extolled the virtues of housewives who through street industry participation, were making their contribution to the mass production campaign.⁴⁵ In a speech by Cai Chang to the second National People's Congress in 1959, the situation of street industries in Beijing was addressed:

. housewives, mobilized by the large-scale mass movement, established more than 400 street factories and organized more than 2,900 street production units involving scores of trades and more than 200 kinds of products. . . . Many such products were made of materials discarded by factories or of waste and obsolete articles (New China News Agency, 1959; March 7:8).

⁴⁵ See, for example, a New China News Agency release for March 7, 1959, "Growing Membership of Tientsin's First Housewives Cooperatives." It praises the achievement of 1,100 housewives who collectively provided materials for a local electric wire factory.

What is more significant than the proportion of women in this sector, is the nature of the production relations which characterize it. Unlike workers in 'regular' industry, steel industry workers received little in the way of state support, either in national welfare services or capital investment. As Andors notes:

Street industry was characterized by small-scale production mainly for local consumption, the utilization of homemade tools and equipment, makeshift quarters, a generally low pay scale, and no coverage under the national insurance scheme (1976:91, fn. 8).

The variety of services provided by these state organized production units ranged from the production of small consumer goods such as shoes and clothing to the provision of goods for larger factory production, such as dyes used in manufacturing processes (see Schurmann, 1968:391-97). The advantages to the state in collectivizing these production units were several. First, the state was able to eliminate the competition of previously private production enterprises which had undermined the state's control over urban labour allocation and consumer good prices by the end of the Five-Year Plan. Second, the state reaped the benefits of supplementary production with low risks in terms of capital outlay. Moreover, the state was now able to exert some control over the type of goods produced by different sectors. As Weinbaum notes:

By replacing household decision making with collective decision making in the street workshops, the state also received a sectoral segmentation according to sphere. A portion of these workshops went to processing or producing intermediary goods to state factories, thus lowering the cost of production in the state sphere itself. Another portion went into producing consumer goods, but different goods than those supplied by the factories now controlled by the state. Thus the state's consumer goods suffered no competition from the non-state sphere (1976:43-44).

Finally, the disproportionate mobilization of women, particularly urban housewives, for this relatively 'inferior' sector of industry meant that the state could pool underutilized labour resources without having to drain labour resources from designated areas of production priority, like heavy industry. In addition, the increased migration of families to urban areas during the Leap period only served to intensify the supply of available surplus labour. Thus, as a strategy for both increasing consumer goods production with little cost, and effectively controlling labour supply, the collectivization of street industry intersected conveniently with a sex division of labour.

The situation of female industrial participation in the crisis years is not open to accurate quantitative assessment. It can only be inferred from the economic trends in overall nonagricultural employment. We know, for example, that as the urban population grew beyond labour absorption capacity, unemployment rose and the state was forced to send rural migrants back to the countryside. There is also evidence, discussed earlier, to suggest a serious retrenchment in industrial employment as capital construction projects were curtailed and local industrial establishments dismantled. It would appear reasonable to suggest, therefore, that the marginal location of women in nonagricultural employment (particularly industry) which has been demonstrated, was an important factor in their vulnerability to the economic recession. Emerson, for example, notes without further elaboration that the mobilization of women for mass production drives such as earth-moving virtually ended during the

crisis years (1967:435). In addition, Andors argues that women formed a large proportion of those industrial workers officially designated as 'temporary workers' in the early sixties, employment characterized by low job security and employment benefits and significantly lower wages than regular workers (1976:103-104). Further evidence of the vulnerability of women's employment during the recession years can be found in the decline of collectively-organized street industries. The lack of material resources available for such production and the reduction in demand for their output from both the state and consumer spheres led to the closing of many such units and the reappearance of others as private production units (see Schumann, 1968:394-99 and Andors, 1976:104). Thus the marginality of female employment, as reflected in their location in this vulnerable sector, had the consequence of increasing the dependency of women on the household as a source of maintenance, rather than on independently-derived income. This will become clearer in the following section when I address the question of withdrawal of household support services and the increased focus on women's responsibility for household labour during this period.

Finally, it is interesting to note the degree of expansion in educational opportunities for women as a factor in their potential to move into nonagricultural employment. According to the State Statistical Bureau, the total number of male and female graduates from post-secondary institutions, technical schools and primary schools increased approximately 30 percent for each category between

Table 50: Proportion of Female Students to Total Number
of Students, 1957-58
(percentage of total in each category).

	1957	1958
Primary Schools	34.5	38.5
Middle Schools	30.8	31.3
Technical Middle Schools	26.5	27.0
Institutes of Higher Learning	23.3	23.3

SOURCE: State Statistical Bureau; Ten Great Years, 1960:201.

1957 and 1958 (State Statistical Bureau, 1960:195).⁴⁶ Nevertheless, female students as a proportion of that total showed real gains only in primary schools, where their proportion increased by 4 percent (see Table 50). Otherwise their increases were either slight, or, as in the case of post-secondary education, negligible. To what extent this pattern continued in 1960-62 is unknown, but it is significant as one indication of the relatively lower skill levels that women brought to the nonagricultural labour market in that period.

The implication of the above analysis is that the sectoral location of women in agricultural and nonagricultural labour during the Leap years must be seen as a significant factor when considering the nature of the crisis which swept China in the post-Leap years. It was clearly state policy that women substituted for men when the latter were required elsewhere in production. As a consequence, when men were no longer needed in other sectors, they would return to their previous tasks; thus, forcing adaptations in female participation. Women's employment unquestionably rose during the Leap years, but relative to male employment and in consideration of the nature of labour participation, sex subordination remained. The fact that the state did not consider a sex division of labour problematic, and in fact endorsed the allocation of women to agriculture and men to industry, is compelling evidence of the strategic efficiency of such a mechanism for labour allocation. In the following section, this argument is explored further when

⁴⁶ Secondary or middle school graduates increased by only one percent.

considering the relationship of women to domestic labour and the household unit during this period.

2. The Domestic Sphere

The contradictory and fluctuating demands on female social labour, have been outlined in the previous section, suggesting the links between state economic policy and sex subordination. The impact of this material context for the organization of domestic labour was also reflected in contradictory patterns concerning collective structures, ideological emphasis on the role of the housewife, birth control campaigns and domestic production-for-exchange.

During the Great Leap Forward the whole thrust of state policy was to bring as much labour power as possible into production for the state. In order to accomplish this task, it became necessary to 'manage' the impediments to female entrance; specifically the state was faced with the range of necessary labour tasks provided by women for the household unit. The solution was to collectivize that labour in the form of state-organized support services which both released women from domestic tasks for additional social production (as discussed in previous section). The extent of these services during the Leap was considerable. Childcare facilities, in particular, were a key aspect of state policy to mobilize women. In a 1958 news release the state announced both impressive strides in the provision of such facilities in rural areas and their importance for freeing women in production:

Kindergartens are helping to look after some 25,000,000 children this year, according to incomplete data. This is

23 times last year's figure. In addition, about three million in the countryside alone are helping mothers to look after 24 million children. . . . On the average about 85 percent of the pre-school children in the countryside go to nurseries or kindergartens. In some cases the figures reach as high as over 90 percent. . . . These nurseries and kindergartens are particularly welcome to women members of the communes because they relieve them of household work and enable them to engage more fully in productive work (New China News Agency, 1958; Dec. 30:3-4).

Other official estimates for 1959 suggest that nationally 60 percent of the children of working mothers were cared for in commune nurseries,⁴⁷ while Thorborg's tabulations of various provincial estimates suggest a range of 53 to 73 percent (1978:601).

When these figures are compared with estimates for 1956 which suggest a maximum of 7 to 10 percent of children of working mothers in collective facilities, the dramatic increase in such services is apparent. The quality of services offered varied, and these were more prevalent as a rule in rural areas compared to urban areas. The number of children cared for in these facilities usually averaged between eight and twenty, and often were supervised by one person, sometimes an elderly woman of the commune (Thorborg, 1978:602-603).

Other collective support services offered care, communal dining halls and kitchens, collective sewing centres and laundry groups, homes for the elderly and maternity hospitals.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Based on a New China News Agency release for March 2, 1959-- 'Maternity Work Develops Fast With Industrial and Agricultural Leaps Forward'. Cited in Survey of China Mainland Press, #1975:7-8.

⁴⁸ See 'Tsai Chang Addresses Peking Women's Rally' (New China News Agency, 1959: March 7) and 'Women's New Life in Rural People's Communes', (Wang Yin, 1959).

Quantitative data on these services are scarce, although one source claimed over 2.5 million commune dining halls, serving meals to 90 percent of the rural population by the end of 1958 (Wang Yin, 1959:8). In addition, another source claimed a sum of 100,000 maternity hospitals in rural areas, with a total of 400,000 beds (New China News Agency, 1959: March 2).

The provision of collective support structures during the post-Leap years suffered a serious retrenchment, as economic cutbacks in all service areas and realignment of state economic policies led to a renewed emphasis of the independent household unit. One indicator of this retrenchment was the closing of communal dining halls in most rural communes, except during the busy agricultural seasons (Davlin, 1976:128-29). Also there is evidence to suggest that childcare facilities decreased in number and remained in place largely as temporary facilities for agricultural workers during the busy season. In a 1963 Women's Federation article, for example, the emphasis was placed on temporary childcare:

If mothers need others to care for their children during the busy seasons in agriculture and when all (labour) power has to be united to accomplish a heavy work burden in a short time, then temporary child care stations should be set up to care for the children during this time (cited in Thorborg, 1978:603).

The emphasis on the temporary nature of such facilities was combined with a new policy in 1961 recommending the assignment of women to agriculture on the basis of their childcare and household responsibilities at home. Essentially women were classified into four categories with differing norms for participation in social production.

1. Women without children or household work were required to work 24 days per month.
2. Women with children cared for by family members and light household work had to work 20-22 days per month.
3. Women with both children and household burdens were asked to work 15 days per month.
4. Women with both children and household burdens and in bad health were required to work 12 days per month (Thorborg, 1978:695).

What is significant about the approach taken to childcare and other domestic tasks during this period is the renewed emphasis given the role of the housewife. This is not to suggest a return to the 'cult of the housewife' period prevalent during the Five-Year Plan. Rather, organizational and ideological pressure reflected an emphasis on individual female responsibility for 'managing' household and social labour. This marks a significant retreat from the Leap emphasis on collective responsibility. The realignment of labour days according to domestic responsibilities was one significant indicator of this shift. It was also reflected in the slogans and campaigns of various women's organizations, and given wide exposure in the popular media. It is interesting, for example, to compare a 1959 speech by the President of the Women's Federation outlining the major tasks facing Chinese women, to resolutions endorsed by the 1962 Guangdong Provincial Women's Congress.⁴⁹ In 1959, Cai Chang (Tsai

⁴⁹ See 'Tsai Chang Addresses Peking Women's Rally' (New China News Agency, March 7, 1959) in Survey of China Mainland Press #1971:8-9, and 'Unite with the Broad Masses of Women in the Whole Province' by Chou Wan-ju (1962) in Survey of China Mainland Press #2720:4-10.

Chang) outlined five proposals regarding the work of Chinese women:

- 1) active participation in the mass production campaigns;
- 2) improvement and development of all collective support services;
- 3) cultivation of proper socialist and Communist consciousness;
- 4) promotion of women cadres in the Party; and 5) protection of female workers' welfare (New China News Agency, March 7, 1959).

Throughout the elaboration of these proposals the independent family unit or family life was never mentioned; emphasis was consistently placed upon women as members of the larger collective community. As a consequence, the organizational efforts of women's groups were directed solely towards effective participation in that sphere.

By 1962, however, 'family life' had reappeared as a central focus in the literature of women's organizations.⁵⁰ More importantly, it was now singled out as something which women must 'manage' effectively in order that their 'social' productivity not be threatened. Thus, women were not expected to return exclusively to the housewife role as collective services collapsed and the economy faced serious strain. Rather, they were now expected to carry on both social labour and domestic labour roles in the absence of support structures provided during the Leap. In the 1962 Guangdong resolutions, for example, new policy measures were adopted:

⁵⁰ See, for example, Jan Myrdal's interview with Li Kuei-ying, a former head of the women's organization in Liu Ling. In 1962, she outlined the major tasks of the organization as including encouraging 'effective' domestic work, teaching personal hygiene and offering advice in marital matters (Myrdal, 1965:224).

The policy of "building the nation and running one's home with industry and economy" should be implemented through the following three principal ways: engaging in production industriously, practicing severe economy, and arranging family life systematically (Chou, 1962:8).

In articulating the means to carry this out, the Women's Congress suggested that housewives call on relatives for assistance in domestic labour, use their holidays from social labour and finally, in circumstances which do not permit the latter and are economically feasible, establish some form of collective service. The latter, however, was defined as only a temporary measure in particular circumstances. Finally, underlying all else in this document was the recognition that women enter social production under different conditions; conditions determined by their sex and their responsibility for domestic labour:

. . . when mobilizing women to take part in the social labour, we must take into consideration their physical ability, physiological characteristics, and household chores, and work out rational arrangements for them so as to guarantee their health (Chou, 1962:6).

The acceptance by women's groups of the 'necessity' of a sex division of labour was coupled with little attention given to the role of the male in domestic labour. The absence of any discussion of male responsibilities in domestic labour in the media during this period has been noted elsewhere by Andors (1976:96). What this suggests is further confirmation to women that the contradictions posed by responsibility for social labour and domestic labour must be dealt with by women themselves.

The development and implementation of birth control policies through the Leap and post-Leap years was uneven and, at times, contradictory. During 1956 and 1957, as noted in the previous chapter, some minimal progress had been made in encouraging family planning, particularly in urban areas. During the Great Leap Forward, however, such attempts to control population were temporarily abandoned and at times even officially condemned (Parish and Whyte, 1978:140). The latter took the form of an attack against economic development theories premised on the necessity of population control. Clearly, this was directly related to the state's new emphasis on labour power as an important productive resource in the absence of surplus capital. The concern of the state regarding childbirth during the Leap years was more directed towards protecting and improving the health of mother and child, as indicated in the increase in maternity hospitals during the Leap.⁵¹ At the same time, however, this concern was often expressed with contradictory views for contraception:

The use of contraception to safeguard the health of mothers and children was advocated, but at the same time large families were encouraged (Davín, 1976:134).

Overall, there appears to have been very little attention given to family planning in this period and fertility rates remained high, especially among rural women where those in their thirties had

⁵¹ This concern for improving the conditions under which women give birth is expressed, for example, in 'Maternity Work Develops Fast With Industrial and Agricultural Leaps Forward' (New China News Agency, March 2, 1959).

on the average four to six births each (Salaff, 1973:96).⁵²

The crisis and retrenchment years following the Leap were marked by renewed attempts to promote birth control in a vigorous manner. Efforts included information campaigns on contraceptives, encouragement for later marriage and smaller families, and the establishment of local family planning clinics (Parish and Whyte, 1978:140-141; Davin, 1976:132-33 and Andors, 1976:95-96). What is particularly interesting about the various state attempts to popularize birth control in this period is the focus of attention on the female's responsibility for contraception. The lack of male involvement in birth control is reflected, for example, in the absence of media appeals to men while those directed at women were widespread. Andors, for example, could find evidence of only a few media articles on vasectomy as late as 1963, while those concerning female sterilization, a more complicated procedure, were widespread (1976:95-96).⁵³ In addition, giving women assistance to plan their childbirths was defined as a central task in women's organizations (Chou, 1962:9).

The success of these campaigns cannot be empirically assessed for this period. Parish and Whyte suggest that refugee interviews

⁵² This figure is based on a 1959 survey of urban and rural women in the province of Hebei. It originally appeared in the Chinese Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology; January, 1960.

⁵³ Andors also notes the lack of articles on birth control in more general media publications, as compared to their frequent visibility in the women's publication, Chinese Women (1976:96).

indicated a wide awareness of the programs among rural women in Guangdong in the early sixties; but that awareness did not lead to significant increases in contraceptive practice (1978:141). Aside from understaffed clinics and low availability of supplies, rural women in particular, often faced the problem of male resistance to family planning. As noted by one of the women of Liu Ling in Myrdal's interviews:

In certain families with lots of children, the women would like birth control, but their husbands won't. In those families the husband says: "There's not going to be any family planning here!" (Myrdal, 1965:226).

Often this resistance by rural males was tied to the continuing incentive to large families in agricultural production, particularly when private family production was permitted. Until material disincentives to childbirth were introduced (as they were in later periods), the effectiveness of any birth control campaign was inevitably weakened.

Finally, as was discussed earlier, the role of domestic production-for-exchange shifted throughout the Leap and post-Leap periods. In urban areas during the Leap years, collectivization of street industry, a form of production originally based upon domestic relations of exchange, was useful in the leeway it offered the state for controlling production. As already noted, it obtained necessary products for consumption at low risk, control over type of goods produced (thereby reducing competition with state-sector goods) and the ability to allocate other labour to priority sectors. At the same time the additional, albeit meagre, flow of income back to the household unit from this sphere served to supplement income derived

from other members' state wages. The advantage of this factor to the state is addressed by Weinbaum:

. . . as the household unit pools income from at least two other members, one working for the state and the other outside it, the wage bill to the state of its own workers is lowered. Thus the state can accumulate more, since it is paying out only a part of the cost of reproduction of labour, rather than the total cost. To this extent, income to the household from the collective sphere stabilizes state accumulation (1976:44; emphasis added).

In agricultural areas, the shifting policies toward private plots and sideline production were reflected in differing emphasis given the role of women in this sector of production. During the peak of communization of agriculture, the illegalization of all private production was accompanied by the absorption of surplus household labour into other spheres, such as communal services, mass labour projects and agricultural production. The reintroduction of private plots and independent household production during the crisis years became, as discussed previously, an important arena for female labour participation. This did not lead to the withdrawal of women from agricultural production; rather their responsibilities ranged across various spheres. A twenty-five year old woman from North China described her 'typical' day to Myrdal in 1962.

My husband goes out to the fields at daybreak. When he has gone, I make breakfast for myself and the children and for him. A special food carrier from his group fetches him breakfast. . . I myself usually go out to work at about seven or eight o'clock. I get home to the cave about twelve and make dinner. My husband rests while I am preparing food, then we eat and he has a sleep. Sometimes he helps me. He looks after the children then. . . . At about two in the afternoon, we go out to work again, and we usually get home about eight in the evening. Then we have supper and go to bed.

I feed the pigs, the hens and the goats before I go to work in the morning. I also see to the animals in the evenings. That's my responsibility (Myrdal, 1965:212-213).

Apparent in this example is not only the dual nature of the housewife's labour responsibilities, both social and domestic, but also the explicit division of labour in domestic responsibilities. If assistance is given by the husband, it is defined as exceptional and temporary. Other interviews by Myrdal reinforce this picture of the women's work day and elaborate other responsibilities such as making clothes and shoes for family use, weeding the private garden and gathering manure for private agricultural production (1965:229-238). Finally, I have noted in the preceding section the involvement of various women's organizations in actively encouraging women to develop a variety of sideline occupations, particularly in regards to handicraft manufacture. The reopening of rural markets became the forum for the exchange of such goods, again providing a means of supplementary family income outside the state sector.

E. Conclusion

The preceding discussion of two key periods in socialist development in China has suggested several patterns in the relationship of economic factors and sex subordination.

First, there is indication of a persisting malleability to female participation in social production. There is no question that the policies of the Leap concerning surplus labour mobilization created a context for increasing demand for female labour. However, the later retrenchment in mobilization drives was accompanied by a

drop in female entrance as labour absorption capacity decreased and men returned to jobs temporarily filled by women.

Second, the available evidence suggests a reproduction of a sex division of labour by economic branch and sector. During the Leap women were more likely to make their contribution in agriculture rather than industry and, within industry, in light as opposed to heavy sectors. The implications stemming from this allocation were several. The heavy concentration of women in agriculture was vulnerable in the face of later reductions of male labour in industry. In addition, light industry was a sector in relative decline, in comparison to heavy industry, during the Leap. As a consequence, they were caught in a declining sector of employment as indicated by their decrease in overall nonagricultural employment. This vulnerability was intensified by their location in various service occupations (for example, communal support facilities) which were more open to state cutback. Finally, women did not increase their relative share of employment in the key sectors of economic growth. The marginal position of women in industry continued in a period of massive expansion of that sector. The one exception to this was female concentration in street industry, a sector defined by traditional inputs, low income and little state support. Again, this was also a sector particularly vulnerable to the retrenchment policies of the post-Leap state planners. The significant point of the above patterns is to suggest that the sex division of labour during this period must be examined in light of the overall structural position of the labour force in conjunction with overall

economic policies. When this is done, the continuing subordination of female employment is evident, in the context of both sector importance and sector vulnerability.

Third, the organization of the household unit throughout the Leap and post-Leap years created a dramatic shift in the context for female labour. During the Leap, the intention was to bring all household members activities into the collective sphere, thereby displacing the household as an independent unit for production and accumulation. The chief mechanism for carrying this out was the commune, particularly through its provision of various collective services. It also involved, however, the elimination of independent sideline production and the transfer of all family labour to the collective sphere. The later revival of the household as an independent unit of production and accumulation alongside the collective sphere, was accompanied by a withdrawal of collective services and the encouragement for women to re-establish sideline production. What is significant about the changing emphasis on the family unit is the centrality of the female to that structure. The dependence of the housewife on external supports in order to allow her access to outside labour, puts the women in a very different relation to production than males. Not only is she more vulnerable in terms of the permanence of her outside labour, she is also more burdened, in terms of her dual responsibilities, and more vulnerable to loss of support facilities.

Fourth, and related to the above, the shifting emphasis on the family unit was accompanied by a changing concern with the

question of domestic labour. During the Leap period the responsibility for such labour, as noted above, was clearly defined as collective in order to facilitate the entrance of females into production. When economic crises forced retrenchment in a variety of areas, the role of the housewife took on renewed importance. This took the form of emphasis on individual responsibility for domestic tasks, adjustment of labour days in light of domestic responsibilities and encouragement of domestic production-for-exchange. The implication is that when the state required massive inputs of labour, domestic labour could be socialized (albeit based upon a sex division of labour). When the absorption capacity for labour had been surpassed, however, a return to privatized domestic labour was strategically efficient.

In summary, the shifting economic policies and development strategies which defined the Leap and post-Leap years created particular consequences for women. Throughout both periods the relative subordination of women persisted, although in different forms and to different degrees. What is common throughout these years, however, is the reproduction and maintenance of a sex division of labour in production and in the household, which intersected other state policies on labour supply and allocation. The implication drawn from the above analysis is that the particular character and shape of that sex division of labour was strategically related to the historically-defined needs for labour power and economic growth in each period. The consequence for women was a continuing marginalization and peripheralization of their relationship to

production, a continuing entrenchment of their dual responsibilities for domestic and social labour, and a perpetuation of a subordinate status with accompanying secondary standards of living.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation with the intention of developing an adequate analytical base for the investigation of sex subordination in socialist societies. Moreover, I sought to provide an explanation for the persistence of sex subordination in relation to other socio-economic processes, suggesting that one could point to particular theoretical linkages. I then proposed to examine the plausibility of this analysis in the case of one socialist society in particular, the People's Republic of China.

My dissatisfaction with existing theoretical frameworks for the analysis of sex subordination led to an attempt to develop and articulate a socialist feminist framework, relying on the various analytical and research contributions of scholars studying the position of women in centre and dependent capitalist societies. The advantages of socialist feminist theory I argued, lie in its attempt to locate patriarchy in both an historical and material context, seeing it as a set of material and ideological relations of subordination which interact with production relations within variable historical circumstances. The key concept in this analysis is the sex division of labour, an allocating mechanism which cuts through the organization of production and the family, and is supported ideologically by cultural values and beliefs. Essentially

a socialist feminist asks two key questions in historical research: how does the particular operation of a sex division of labour intensify or restrict power differentials between men and women; and how do particular economic factors intensify or restrict the operation and emphasis of a sex division of labour? In order to address these questions, three particular research relationships were isolated for examination:

1. The relationship between the use and distribution of female labour power and the economic priorities of the state.
2. The relationship between the distribution of female productive labour and the mode of economic organization.
3. The relationship between the distribution and organization of female social labour and the organization of female domestic labour.

In the investigation of these research relationships, five specific factors were identified as crucial to an understanding of sex subordination: participation in production, context of participation, demand for labour, control over production and organization of childcare and domestic tasks. In a summary of socialist feminist research on women in capitalist societies, it was suggested that these factors tended to appear in particular patterned relationships which could be understood in the context of specific material conditions of capitalist relations. These same factors were examined in the context of China and particular relationships have also been suggested. These are summarized below.

A. Relationships Between Female Labour Use and Economic Priorities

One of the consistent features of female labour

participation in the periods under examination is its subordination to prevailing economic priorities. In both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary contexts, the CCP created conditions which either facilitated or hindered female labour participation depending upon the given need for surplus labour. In addition, the entrance of women into social production was channelled to particular sectors, depending upon the defined requisites of the state in sector expansion.

Female labour use prior to 1949 must be understood in the context of the requisites of revolutionary mobilization. During periods of military mobilization, the drain of male labour away from productive activity, especially in agriculture, led to an intensified demand for female labour. Releasing women for social production was, in fact, defined by the CCP as the key to eliminating patriarchy. Once the mobilization of women for social labour was accomplished, the sex inequality which remained was defined as an ideological problem, requiring time and education to disappear. The consequences of this approach were reflected in an increase in the number of women involved in production, but a reinforcement of a traditional sex division in labour tasks. This approach can be interpreted in light of the role of the peasantry in CCP political strategy. As argued earlier, the Chinese Communists were forced to walk a fine line between the implementation of particular socio-economic reforms and the possible alienation of a necessary ally. Generally the compromise involved a retrenchment of radical family policies and the structural subordination of feminist demands to 'class' priorities.

The requisites of the Party in this period were to build a secure economic base in order to maintain economic self-sufficiency and to undermine traditional authority links which sustained the bourgeois state. To the extent that it served both ends, an attack on feudal patriarchy was strategically advantageous to the Party's priorities. The form that this attack took was to legitimize the large-scale entrance of women into social production and thereby increase resources for production and the war effort, while at the same time preserving the individual household unit as central to production.

During the Rehabilitation Period of 1949 to 1952, the new state remained committed to the Yanan policy of achieving sex equality through female labour mobilization. The overall economic priorities in this period were to restore the war-torn economic infrastructure in agriculture and industry, and to lay the institutional foundation for the future socialization of production. In agriculture land reform policies and labour mobilization strategies created an increased demand for female social labour in the context of household-based production. The rising sector of modern industry did not experience significant increases in the proportion of women involved. The pre-liberation dominance of women in early factory labour was quickly superseded in this period as male entrance into industry rose dramatically. The implications of their participation in terms of sector importance will be addressed in the following sections. It is significant, however, to note that the importance of female labour (in terms of state efforts to mobilize it) appears in this period to be inversely related to designated

higher-priority sectors of economic expansion and capital investment.

The First Five-Year Plan Period of 1953 to 1957 provided a context of high growth objectives with expansion of heavy industry as the key. It was assumed that the 'spread effect' of economic growth in industry would aid agricultural development, where institutional restructuring substituted for capital inputs. As a result of this approach, female labour use was found to shift depending on varying demands for labour, variable capacity to absorb labour and the priority of certain labour sectors. The increased collectivization of agriculture brought more women into agricultural production, although this varied by region. In areas such as the Northeast, lower labour demands in agriculture were reflected in lower participation rates. Also in rural areas close to urban centres female participation was higher due to the migration of rural males to urban, industrial sectors. The state's policies concerning industrial growth created an attraction for the urban labour market which was not matched by a parallel capacity to absorb labour. The resulting oversupply of urban labour was accompanied by a relative decrease in the proportion of women in industry, even though overall industrial employment rose significantly. At the same time mounting ideological pressure in this period suggested that household labour in urban areas could be a worthwhile alternative to social labour, thereby increasing the importance of the family unit for absorbing surplus labour. Finally, the concentration of female nonagricultural labour in low-priority sectors such as services and light industry

must be understood in light of the relative decline of those sectors.

The Great Leap Forward of 1958 to 1959 sought the simultaneous development of industry and agriculture, largely through the mobilization of capital inputs to the former and underutilized labour to the latter. In addition, it called for a rapid acceleration of the collectivization movement with the introduction of communes, and the dispersal of small-scale industry to rural areas. The consequence of Leap priorities for female labour was a dramatic increase in demand, especially in agricultural production sectors where labour-intensive organization predominated. Women did not increase their status in priority sectors of growth, such as heavy industry, and found their entrance channelled towards traditional sectors of participation. The later retrenchment in Leap priorities during the crisis years of 1960 to 1962 was reflected in a more conservative approach to state investment, labour mobilization, communal services and incentive structures. For women this meant a decline in overall labour participation as absorption capacity decreased and males returned to sectors temporarily staffed by female labour during the Leap. The withdrawal of support services, which had facilitated female entrance into production, was accompanied by a re-emphasis on individual (female) responsibility for these tasks. In addition, the reintroduction of private subsidiary production led to the return of women to pre-Leap traditional tasks.

In summary, the available evidence from the historical examination of these periods suggests that the relationship of female

labour to socialist objectives in China is not an absolute. Rather, female labour participation must be seen as a malleable factor, subject to the particular material crises faced by the state in any given period, and to the particular economic priorities of state planners. Thus, while from its inception the CCP had adopted the Marxian-Engelsian link between sex equality and labour participation, in practice sex equality was often made subordinate to other socioeconomic objectives of the state.

B. Relationship Between Female Labour Use and Mode of Economic Organization

As I argued in the theoretical discussion of socialist feminism, it is not sufficient to consider only the degree of female labour use in relation to demand. Equally, if not more, important is the context of female labour entrance and the types of control exerted by women over production processes. My historical examination has suggested a persistent reproduction of a sex division of labour which allocates female social labour to the more marginal, temporary, traditional and non-dominant sectors of production. Overall it suggests that female labour was consistently placed in a secondary position relative to male labour.

During the pre-liberation era of revolutionary mobilization, the stage was set in CCP policy documents by the acceptance of a sex division of labour as natural and inevitable. From the very beginning, attempts to mobilize female labour were predicated on conservative assumptions concerning what women 'traditionally'

produce and whether sufficient male labour was already available. As a result, the main effort of CCP women's organizations during this time was to channel women's labour toward agricultural sectors vacated by male army recruits, production co-operatives organized around the household unit, textile and food production tasks, and various forms of 'rear army' support services. The implications of sex-divided labour were not questioned by the Party; rather it set in place an established identification between labour participation and appropriate sectors of participation (i.e., those built around labour traditionally associated with women).

The implications of the CCP endorsement of sex-divided labour were quickly reflected in the mobilization strategies of the Rehabilitation Period. The available evidence suggests a reproduction of a sex division of labour by economic branch and sector which resulted in the marginalization of female social labour. The participation of women in agriculture increased, but more in the context of temporary and seasonal labour rather than of permanent participation. The increased mobilization of women during the busy season was argued to be a consequence of the prevailing productivity campaigns in agriculture, rather than of the state objectives to structurally integrate women into agriculture. Moreover, the type of labour performed was consistently of low-skill level and often controlled by male kinsmen who directed the mutual aid teams. These factors combined to create systematic differentials in remuneration for male and female agricultural labour. In the nonagricultural sphere, which was rapidly expanding in industry in particular, women

were more likely to enter the traditional rather than modern branch, with their highest concentration in labour-intensive handicraft and service sectors. In other words, women were overrepresented in what were essentially declining economic spheres and declining sectors of employment. This pattern was also repeated in their entrance into the modern sphere. The pre-liberation dominance of women in industry quickly eroded with the increased priority attached to industry, and their prevalence was limited to light industry, a sector in decline relative to heavy industry. The increased opportunities for males in the rising modern sphere and the priority sectors were accompanied by inter-industry wage differentials which favoured male labour sectors over female sectors.

The first Five-Year Plan policies further enhanced the peripheralization of female labour through strategies which continued to entrench a sex division of labour. In agriculture, the increase in the proportion of women participating was qualified by their concentration in part-time labour. The lower expectations of the state regarding female labour days were related to the requirements placed on women for private subsidiary production and household labour. In other words, female responsibility for additional, unpaid labour restricted their access to paid agricultural labour. Even when they did work in paid labour, their compensation was restricted by their location in labour tasks defined as 'lower grade', and hence subject to lower payment. In nonagricultural labour, women were more likely to be found in the declining traditional branch and concentrated in the traditional sectors of handicrafts and services.

Their decline as a proportion of industrial sectors is significant in light of the increasing dominance of the latter in state investment and expansion. Moreover, the persisting concentration of women in light industry was linked to the continuing decline of that sector and the lower wages relative to heavy industry. Overall, the continued subordination of female labour to male labour was argued to be a consequence of the sex division of labour which allocated women to non-dominant sectors characterized by low growth, little capital investment, high vulnerability and low compensation.

The Great Leap Forward in principle marked a decisive opportunity to redress these patterns of subordination, due to its emphasis on transferring all household members to the collective sphere of labour. In other words, the economic objectives of mass labour mobilization created a potential context for full integration of women into production. To the extent that female labour entrance rose, facilitated by a variety of state-provided services, the Leap plan was advantageous to women. However, their large-scale entrance was set in the context of a sex division of labour which allocated women to labour sectors temporarily vacated by males and to declining sectors of employment. Thus, there was a dramatic increase in female participation in agriculture, both in absolute numbers and share of labour days, which permitted the release of male labour for the rural industrial sector, a key element in Leap policies. Their location in agriculture, however, was vulnerable to post-Leap cutbacks in industry which sent male labour back to agriculture. There was, in other words, no permanent structural integration of female

agricultural labour; it was subject to the state allocations of male labour. This pattern of vulnerability was also reflected in the high concentration of female workers in commune services, a sector which was subject to severe cutbacks during the retrenchment years.

Moreover, the overrepresentation of women in the lower wage grades of the commune wage systems is an indication of the location of women in more under-valued and marginal tasks. In nonagricultural labour, the slight decrease in the proportion of women was a reflection of their pre-Leap concentration in the traditional branch of the economy which was precarious in the light of Leap policies. The entrance of women into industry remained marginal even though there was a rapid expansion of that sector. The one significant exception noted was street industry, a sector characterized by inferior resources and relations of production, and a sector particularly subject to the cutbacks of the crisis years.

In summary, the historical analysis of this time frame in Chinese socialist development has suggested that the distribution of female social labour has been consistently intersected by a sex division of labour which channels women into particular labour sectors. These sectors are characterized by a peripheral relation to core sectors, a vulnerability to declining employment opportunities and a marginal link to state-defined growth areas. The analysis thereby suggests a strategic efficiency in the maintenance of a sex division of labour in the sense that it offers the state a 'secondary' labour pool of marginal workers which has advantages both in its malleability and its lower costs to the state.

C. Relationship Between Social Labour and Domestic Labour

The final relationship investigated in the course of the historical examination was the link between the organization of social labour through the productive sphere and the organization of domestic labour through the family sphere. A persistent pattern uncovered in this analysis has been the shifting articulation of domestic relations in conjunction with shifting state socioeconomic exigencies. In particular periods, the family unit has provided an important source of necessary surplus labour for the productive sphere, thereby precipitating a reorganization of domestic labour responsibilities. In other periods the incapacity to absorb labour has brought about a parallel attempt to preserve the traditional family unit and the subsidiary labour it provides. The significance of this shift is located in the implications it bears for the interrelationship of the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction.

During the formative years of the pre-liberation era, the CCP shifted between marriage and family policies which radically uprooted the traditional structure, and those which tended toward a more conservative preservation of feudal family relationships. The explanation for this shift was found in the opposing requisites of class alliance versus revolutionary mobilization. In addition, the extent to which women entered social production during these periods was closely intertwined with their role in household labour. Not only was their social labour built around traditional domestic tasks (such as handicraft and textile production); it was customarily

organized around the family unit. This was reflected, for example, in the Party's attempt to organize home co-operatives and female family-based mutual aid teams. One of the aims in this approach was the maintenance of the independent household unit, a structure which was central to the entire system of traditional peasant farm production. As argued earlier in this thesis, the requisite of economic self-sufficiency in the base areas necessitated agrarian reform measures designed to enhance peasant productivity. Thus the CCP chose to introduce strategies which both released untapped productivity and preserved the 'independence' of the peasant household. As a consequence the Party paid little attention to the contradictions inherent in the women's responsibility for domestic and social labour; it was assumed that this was an issue which women themselves could resolve. The reluctance of the CCP to take 'feminist' reforms too far was also reflected in the lack of attention to what were defined as secondary or ideological problems in sex subordination. These included various political rights and marriage practices which marginalized the social status of women. Again, the underlying factor was the need to maintain the loyalty and hence revolutionary participation of the traditional peasantry.

The preservation of the independent household unit continued during the reconstruction years of the new state. At the same time, however, the CCP began intensive campaigns to bring women into social production in order to speed economic recovery. One result was that the marriage laws of this period were explicitly posed as an attack against practices which hindered social productivity.

Inequities within the marriage, between the husband and wife, were intentionally avoided by policy-makers who saw the possibilities for de-stabilizing the household productive unit. In addition, the context for female entrance into production continued to be defined by traditional female tasks and organized around household production. The state did not attempt in any systematic fashion to socialize domestic tasks; rather it was the individual housewife's responsibility to manage participation in both spheres of production. The temporary provision of childcare support services was found only in those regions where seasonal labour demands for female agricultural participation were particularly acute. Otherwise, the state paid little attention to the demands of both spheres, emphasizing the social sphere as one of high-priority.

The state's strategies for socialist collectivization and economic growth during the Five-Year Plan Period created a particular material context for the organization of the household. As this period progressed, the oversupply of labour in urban areas precipitated the emergence of ideological campaigns designed to elevate the role of the housewife and direct attention to the efficient management of domestic tasks. Women were encouraged to see household labour as a worthwhile alternative to social labour and to increase their productivity through domestic production-for-use. In rural areas where high labour demands continued, the emphasis was on encouraging women to efficiently manage both forms of production. In other words, the state was able to both control labour supply through such campaigns and reduce its maintenance costs, by obtaining

a significant amount of unpaid, necessary labour from the housewife. The latter was reflected not only in the subsistence and community labour provided by housewives; it was also apparent in the participation of women in private, household production-for-exchange. Finally, the emergence of initial campaigns to provide birth control services to women during this period can be linked to the state's growing crisis in labour absorption capacity and the economic policies lying behind that crisis.

The organization of the household unit and domestic labour throughout the Leap and post-Leap years illustrates the impact of variable material contexts for the socialization of domestic tasks. During the Leap, the strategy of transferring all under-utilized labour to collective production for the state demanded a parallel strategy of reducing the limitations placed on female entrance by responsibility for household labour. As a result, the massive growth in collective services to the household effectively displaced the independent household unit and redefined domestic labour as a collective responsibility. At the same time, however, a sex division of labour continued to operate which served to define collective domestic labour as 'women's work.' Birth control campaigns also diminished in the context of high labour demand. With post-Leap economic reversals, the independent household unit reappeared, bringing with it the reappearance of private household production and maintenance. At the same time the withdrawal of collective maintenance services was accompanied by a renewed emphasis on individual, female responsibility for household labour and the need

to 'balance' it with responsibilities in social labour. Finally, renewed efforts to promote birth control among women followed the state's recognition of its limits in the absorption of labour.

In summary, the historical analysis carried out in the preceding chapters suggests important links between the organization of social labour and the organization of domestic labour. First, the position of the women within the family unit places significant controls over her access to, and position within social labour.

Therefore, as long as the CCP continued to accept the centrality of the female in domestic tasks, her relationship to social labour was precarious. Second, the family unit serves as an important structure for both absorbing and storing surplus labour power, and for providing and reproducing fresh labour power when necessary. The prevailing patterns of labour supply and demand created by state economic policies provide the context in which either function is precipitated. Finally, the productive tasks carried out by the housewife within the household unit are important not only in the subsistence functions they fulfill, but also in the supplementary income they provide. Both of these aspects of domestic production serve to lower direct maintenance costs to the state and provide a supplementary means of consumer goods production.

D. The Efficacy of Patriarchy

Socialist feminist analysis defines patriarchy as a set of historically-situated relations of sex subordination within the overall organization of productive and symbolic structures, and links

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its appearance in capitalism to particular material factors. In their research on capitalist economies, socialist feminists have argued that patriarchy is an efficient system of sex relations which contributes to historically-defined needs for particular forms of labour organization and distribution. In this dissertation, I have attempted to answer three questions concerning patriarchy and socialism, using China as one case study:

- 1) whether patriarchal relations are reproduced and, in what form;
- 2) what material conditions underlie its reproduction; and
- 3) why it is reproduced.

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to demonstrate the form patriarchy has taken in each period and the socioeconomic factors which shaped its appearance. At the same time, I have suggested that there is an efficacy to patriarchy within socialist development, when one examines the political-economic requisites and priorities of the state. The strategic efficiency of patriarchal relations under varying historical conditions can thus be seen to operate in both capitalist and socialist societies. Again, I reiterate my earlier warning that one should not interpret this in a simplistic context of convergence assumptions. Private accumulation for profit and state accumulation for development provide very different scenarios for examining the organization of production. Nevertheless, my analysis does indicate a similarity in linkages between the organization of production and the appearance of patriarchy. The four major linkages I had suggested in Chapter III in the context of capitalist economies, can now be offered as a

plausible explanation for the reproduction of patriarchy in socialist societies.

First, female labour power can be viewed as a malleable unit for absorbing the costs of production and resolving crises of production in socialism.

Second, women constitute a 'reserve army' of labour mobilized in a cyclical fashion coincident to particular patterns of economic growth and labour supply.

Third, the organization of the family unit serves as a mechanism for absorbing surplus female labour, organizing consumption, reducing state maintenance costs through domestic production, and reproducing labour power for the productive sphere.

Fourth, female labour in public and private spheres of production serves to lower state costs for labour power. Low female labour costs stem from her role in the family sphere and increased accumulation for the state. In addition, her subsistence and subsidiary domestic labour reduces the cost of the reproduction of labour power to the state.

I have argued, in other words, that there was a strategic importance to the reproduction of a sex division of labour in the sense that it allowed the state, under differing historical circumstances, to increase state accumulation and resolve particular crises in production.

The roots for the reproduction of patriarchy in socialist China were also demonstrated in the CCP's inheritance of classical Marxist assumptions which consistently subordinate the sex question to the class question. The failure to come to terms with the sex division of labour, and the inability to link production relations and patriarchal relations have handicapped Chinese Marxism as an analytical model for the understanding of sex subordination. What is necessary, I have argued, is a theory and a praxis which is able to integrate questions concerning the organization of the labour process

(with questions concerning the organization of the family unit. Most importantly, it must address the very real consequences of maintaining a sex division of labour in both the social and private spheres. Until such time that socialist criteria of 'emancipation' reflect these concerns, it should not be surprising that feminist reform follows a tenuous and precarious path in the course of socialist development. This study has demonstrated a continuing and systematic exploitation of Chinese women throughout the periods in question. They have been relegated for the most part to a secondary status accompanied by low wages, double labour burdens in the paid and unpaid spheres, little support facilities and a consistent marginality in state policies. I am not suggesting a conscious conspiracy on the part of Chinese male leaders to subordinate women. I am suggesting that unless socialists begin to address the issues raised by socialist feminist work, women will continue to be peripheral in socialist praxis. As I indicated in the Introduction to this dissertation, I am looking at what socialism has not done for women in one particular case. Nevertheless, this is an important step towards building a vision of what socialism can be for women under the right conditions.

In conclusion, this dissertation is really only a first step in the attempt to fully come to terms with sex subordination and its appearance in socialist societies. The limitations of my analysis lie in several areas. As already noted, the type of data used and the source of this data are sometimes open to question. Although I have attempted to balance the range of sources and scrutinize the

basis of quantitative estimates, this is nevertheless an inevitable problem for those doing research on the People's Republic of China. In addition, for the reasons noted, my analysis ends with the immediate post-Leap years and does not investigate the present structure of sex subordination in China. This is certainly an area needing further research, in order to further extend the analysis of material conditions and reproduction of patriarchy. The work which is being done on sex subordination in contemporary China by feminist sinologists such as Phyllis Andors, Norma Diamond, Judith Salaff and others certainly suggests that the integration of women as equal members of the society has continued to follow a fluctuating path of progress and retrenchment. What is necessary is to analyze the varying material conditions which have appeared coincident to these fluctuations, and investigate whether strategic links continue to exist.

Aside from further research on the contemporary situation in China, this analysis would benefit from comparative studies of other socialist systems. To what extent have Chinese development strategies been used elsewhere; what features of Chinese bureaucratic structures are unique to this society; have similar economic crises in other societies precipitated similar patterns in the distribution of labour? These, and a host of other questions, must be posed in the context of comparative research on socialist societies if one seeks to fully explore the potential of socialist feminist analysis.

Nevertheless, I do see this dissertation as an important step toward the resolution of feminist debates concerning the 'promise' of

socialism. Its contribution lies in its argument that the relationship of women to socialism must be understood in the context of a tension between the emancipatory requisites of women and the political economic requisites of the Party/state. The implication for socialist action is that we must re-think both the analytical tools by which we define subordination, and the organizational tools by which we seek to eliminate it. The key, I have argued, lies in the adoption of a socialist feminist model which offers an analysis of the interaction of public and private spheres and of class subordination and sex subordination. In terms of organizational strategy, it suggests the need to question the structure of sex-divided labour in both production and the family, and to examine the ideological supports which maintain and reproduce such a structure.

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